

# CLOSE UP

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AS IS

BY THE EDITOR.

Following Russian numbers, Censorship numbers, this, it would appear, has of itself become in the main a British number. At all events about half the contents are concerned with British production in one form or another, so while we are here, let us editorially perch on a high branch and inspect a little our bird's-eye-view of the Blessed Isle, quietly, and then fly off again in quest of those morsels of wit and wisdom for which we are gradually growing notorious; feed, says the editor, spreading his wings, my fledglings. So we, like the darky who sang it, "have not long to stay here".

Briefly consider this: Whether you like us or whether you don't, we are an extraordinary nation. When you look at the size of England on the map and look back on her history you feel such prowess and achievement is the Impudence to the world's Dignity. Quite steadily she confiscated and claimed, pillaged and pirated and possessed with the utmost valor so many of the world's best lands, trades and commerce, that considered abstractly, let us say as a theorem perused

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for the first time, and one you had never heard about before, you would in all probability say, " Well, if such a thing were possible, I would look to that country for the future of the world ".

Look at it not as theorem but fact and you see she is resting on her laurels, in fact, using them as a life-belt to paddle round in, and doing her best to lose what she has gained. Trades go one by one and nobody does anything at all about it. And there comes a time in all history when futures become pasts, with countries as with debutantes.

Looking through this *Close Up* we see that nobody has had very much to say for our films that is rewarding in any sense. In fact, you have to search through to Comment and Review, where you may and may not find that one R. H. (whom you may be able to place) is stung into a defence that is in part a rage at the deterioration of our cinematic betters. H. A. Potamkin, another migratory bird, and acknowledged one of America's prize chirpers, looks at things with true birds' eyes, that see in every direction. He is by no means sold on us: Then hear the gentle laughter that echoes through the *Battle of Wardour Street*, where you find the same pioneer will to subdue the geography of the world without any of the science, skill, initiative and forethought of the builders—of a Cook, a Clive, a Hawkins. Names like these are rapidly growing as mythical to our ears as the Hawthorne Heroes.

And all the time something very fine persists. I have said it before (though not loudly enough to prevent the rude boys from trying to rob the nest of the cuckoo's eggs that aren't there) that England has some very fine material indeed. None finer. Now, I ask you to consider the new Book of a Film,



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a more than gratefully received symbol from H. G. Wells which shows once and for all the kind of film England could, should, and will have to make before long if it hopes to take its courage in both hands and leap out of the swamp of amateurishness that would compare unfavorably with the sub-standard quickies of the most abysmal amateur.

There are fine minds in England, a youth ready and eager to be trained. Why not give—now here is my suggestion, and not one of you is going to give it a second thought, until I will probably have to come and start it myself, busy as I am—why not give to this youth of England a school of cinematography at least as official as the censorship, in which it was trained by the finest minds and pioneers of contemporary cinema? If we had any sense at all we would be in a fit state now to be able to produce *The King Who Was A King*. As we are, I would hate to see it undertaken by a British firm, which would ruin it utterly and irrevocably. Indeed, to date, none but an Eisenstein or a Pudovkin would be in a position to be *able* to produce it.

I myself can see no earthly reason why the trade which spends its money in maintaining a body that, as Henry Dobb says, *tears gaps from Jeanne Ney and Crise (The Crisis), and gives a blessing to What Women Did for Me, Crazie Mazie, and professes to stand for culture*, should not give the said body a month's wages in lieu of notice, and give the money instead to a school. Not, no, not for a moment that I am suggesting the school should be, like the censorship, appointed and paid by the trade exclusively. O dear, no! Think what the teaching would be where the ideal is "first-class entertainment for all booking"! But I do think it

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should be in part financed by the trade. Technicians who are actually technical are as necessary to trade as to art. And an electrician has to know the difference between an ohm and an amp, as must the cameraman between a 2 inch lens and a 3.5 *objectif*.

If the Government would not disinterestedly support the remainder, then it would have to be self-supporting. And that excludes at once the poor, which is useless, since the poor have probably the most to give. Scholarships then. What could be more reasonable? And—like the Russian State School—a careful combing out of unsuitable material at the end of a probationary period. To such a school would come as tutors (more often than not with cordons of police) the Eisensteins, Pudovkins, Stabavois and Pabsts; men who think and work, men who study Freud and Pavlof, who evolve theories, who study the psychology of the receptivity of the audience, who have a meaning when they give you a close-up, and another meaning when they don't, men who know what and why and how; builders, in a word. They would come from every country. The newest and profoundest theories would be contrasted, compared, analysed. At the end of the course, the pupil, thoroughly conversant with the whole of his tasks, able to explain to his electrician, or director or cameraman exactly what was necessary, would pass automatically into the studios, in which *none but those so trained would be allowed under any circumstances*.

Resources? Pudovkin, when he was in England, was emphatic in his praise of the studios. "The economy of space is a study in itself," he said.

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As things are, there are hundreds who are incompetent, base, bored and lascivious. They care no more for their work nor the results of it than they do for anybody but themselves and their immediate needs. They know nothing, would refuse to learn on principle if you tried to teach them, and would rather take another job than make any effort to justify themselves. They are slothful, tedious and illiterate, and in their hundreds they clog and waste the youth which cannot get past them. *To-day there is no place for the young man and woman with ideas*—let alone ideals. They are barred out simply. It is a fools' and a braggarts' paradise, and will flop, and nobody will miss it or mourn it.

I repeat again, there are men and women of intellect, power and conviction who could build the English cinema to a position of triumph to equal the Russians. Save *them*, and for God's sake get rid of the licentious rabble that destroys them.

KENNETH MACPHERSON.



## THE BATTLE OF WARDOUR STREET

We are of the stuff that films are made of. Yet we don't get away with it. You need not see British pictures to realise their artistic mediocrity; a glance at the average still produced in our studios is one glance too many.

It's a funny business. At the moment Wardour Street sees visions and its directors dream dreams. One day we shall succeed. One day we shall make a great film. But not just yet.

Wardour Street, flaunting the nosemarks of high finance, gets the blame. The poor critic, distracted between duty to his public and that violent patriotic complex which surges in the breast of every right-minded Briton, lets us down lightly and turns on the tap and the lukewarm adjectives.

We are, we learn with satisfaction, coming on. Our directors are getting better and better. Already, according to one critic, the best American pictures are being made at Elstree. And what's good enough for Hollywood is good enough for Tooting Bec.

Hollywood is our goal. It must be entertainment or nothing. Ours is the Heaven-sent mission of supplying entertainment of the masses, for the masses, by the masses.

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"International" is the chief word in the temper-trying vocabulary of the Wardour Street producer. International. World markets.

That is the secret of British production. World markets. We have ceased to strain after the Quota gnat. It must now be one hundred per cent. or nothing. Let everything pass; let patriotism—bitter pill!—go by the board. Let us get our world markets.

Acting under the curious illusion that we can do in one year that which has taken America eight, we accordingly go all out for the round the world screening. We sell outright to the Dominions. Right, let us get into America. Long cables and sleepless nights, lunches snatched hastily at the Monico, private secretaries living on aspirin, and it is accomplished. We have sold to America!

But it is not good enough. We must now tie up the whole of Europe. Frenzied arguments with a translation bureau, heated words on the long-distance telephone, and an extra fraction has been secured on the Czecho-Slovakian market.

On, on, ye noblest renters! Must the genius of man stop at Constantinople? No, more cables and desperate hours juggling with gibberish. A British film has been sold to China.

It is round the world. El Dorado has been captured. Satisfaction—brief, and indulged in at the Savoy—is followed by chagrin. No rights have been sold to the Dutch East Indies!

The picture? Oh, the picture. Well, what of it? Give it to a man who made a good quickie in 1911. Get a third-rate novelist to write the story. Something with a kick and

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a chorus, something with heartburn and a happy ending. Get the Blank girl to play in it. She's cheap, and a friend of the director's. The picture. . . Yes, it will have to be made some day.

Universal entertainment. What is it? Ask Wardour Street. Something built around a cabaret scene, something with a beauty chorus and just enough lingerie to earn an "A" Certificate. Or an epic of the British Navy with three close-ups of the Union Jack and Mother left at home crying her eyes out. That is the key; heartburn. Sentimental or sensual.

The fault with us, of course, is that many of the men who rule us just don't know what they want. The Street has its doubts and plods on, hoping for the best. We sell to America and then make the picture for five thousand pounds, we make a song of the film rights of *Jew Süss* and then forget all about it.

Wardour Street agrees we must be "international". Accordingly it solves our problems by importing played-out stars and third-rate directors. There are exceptions, of course. We determine to copy Hollywood and steal their cameramen, their technicians, their gagmen, their scenarists. We then decide to use them on a perfectly English story, and venture, viewing the future balance sheet through the rosy glasses of dinner at the Ritz, to risk a whole ten thousand on the picture. With Flossie Footlights in the title role—and she was a box-office draw in Sierra Leone twenty years ago—our profit on the world market already arranged by our Foreign Department is assured.



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Even that is not enough. In English films one has one's cake and eats it. Our pictures must be *national*. "British films must have national characteristics and international entertainment value." The phrase flits through a harassed brain. It was uttered by one of the Wardour Street oracles—there are about fifty of them—at a dinner recently.

Right, let us not forget the national note. We did talk sometime back about a Quota, didn't we? What is a national film? Property man, the Union Jack. Cameraman, take a train and shoot some local colour. Scenarist, hunt out the war songs and look for the catchy lines. International appeal? Well, they can alter it all in the cutting rooms on the other side.

Meanwhile, what of the night? A little stormy, perhaps. Shareholders do not always look as though they have been well fed. Certain banking accounts suggest anaemia. It may be that we spent rather too much on our last theatrical sequence. Could it have been that the film was bad?

It didn't book well on the Continent, certainly. America regurgitated it rather hastily. In England the trade Press let it down by calling it a "Good Booking for Smaller Halls". And even the smaller halls did not like it, judging by exhibitors' letters.

But, argues the Wardour Street oracle, it must have been a good film. Two cabaret sequences and some wonderful war stuff shot on the Riviera. And it stands to reason that if a company goes to the Riviera for exteriors they do so on account of its film potentialities and not because they want a holiday.

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And yet, despite appearances, we have it in us. We are, I say, of the stuff that films are made of. If only we could make up our minds. What are we aiming at? Where are we? Is it to be art or the box-office? Is there, in the long run, any difference between the two? Is it to be Hollywood or Leningrad? Or just Elstree? King Vidor or Eisenstein? Or just G. B. Samuelson? If only we knew. We might be able to get somewhere then.

Yes, we have it in us. Hitchcock just missed great things in *The Ring*. Asquith was intensely interesting in *Underground*. Norman Walker gave us a thoughtful taste of the "purely national" in *Widdicombe Fair*. Dupont, I thought, came a cropper with *Piccadilly*, partly because he might have been filming Timbuctoo for all the relation his picture bore its title. But that, of course, is the "international" note carried to perfection. Perhaps he left it so that they can call it "Broadway" in America. Werner Brandes, at least, achieved something with the camera in the picture, and Dupont himself showed a flair for the pictorial.

One day, when we have forgotten the word "international" and its minor and conflicting echo "national"—made harmonious by that singular line of reasoning adopted in the Street of Films, we shall make a great picture.

Apart from our arguments we are too insular. We know nothing of the cinema about us, only that fraction Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer and Paramount show us. Pudovkin is a naughty boy who achieved news prominence through being mentioned in Parliament.

*Mother* is shown under the rose at the Film Society. *The End of St. Petersburg* receives the same treatment. Only

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profligates, according to our righteous Press, would want to see *Cosmos*. Russian films in general, according to another writer, are generally hysterical. Potemkin is the name of a ship; *Storm Over Asia* has degenerated to a breeze in the *Daily Express* office.

Art, of course, is a word in the dictionary; an organ possessed by every Wardour Street oracle, a pumping machine vaguely connected with the paraphernalia of kidneys and the like. We are stiff-necked people and deserve to be censored. Accordingly, we know not the meaning of cinema. Hollywood's elegant pornography and England's imitation, we are allowed, our eyes can feast on Clara Bow, but *Mechanics of the Brain* is denied us.

Thank God for a sense of humour. Of course, continues the Soho oracle, we have no need to study the work of foreigners, really. We must develop along our own lines. In order to do so we import people from Hollywood and Germany and set them to film impossible stories by magazine writers who—judging by the finished product—never go inside a cinema.

Here and there, in the sea of doubt, tribulation and pain, we can see something to cheer us. Walter Summers almost made something of *The Lost Patrol*. Had he seen the best Continental product before he made it he might have got away with a picture. It was at least a change. Not a cabaret, no motherlove, only one mention of the duty of England's sons when the freedom of the Emerald Isle is questioned. Victor Saville made a sound dramatic subject in *Tesha*, despite its Victorian symbolism where anticipatory motherlove was concerned.



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Perhaps the nucleus has been formed already. Only two racing melodramas were made last year. If only Alfred Hitchcock could stage a comeback and forget he ever made *Champagne*, a film which, as champagne, suggested it had been left in the rain all night. Asquith is developing. Manning Haynes has his potentialities. Dr. Arthur Robison is over here making *The Informer* for British International. Harry Lachman may one day be given something better than a comedy with which to prove his undoubted talent.

Art direction has been whispered in Wardour Street. The words boomed in one day and have lingered on the Dictaphone records. It is not quite known, in certain quarters, what an art director is. At least one oracle maintains that he is a mixture of head carpenter and assistant cameraman. The forty-nine others hold different views. But Hugh Gee has emerged from the noise. Remember how he lifted *Tesha* off a flat screen? Edward Carrick is proving the value of the Craig's blood. It is being slowly apprehended that an art director is a fiend who spends money, but who, given the proper nourishment, can help the picture to net the Almighty Shilling.

Scenarios are more often a hindrance than a help, naturally. Their value to the producer is that they enable him to check up the sequences the director has forgotten to shoot. But Wardour Street is now allowing more than five days for them to be written in. Yes, we are looking up.

Converted greenhouses, age-old brick buildings and the like still serve as studios in many cases. The value of the antiquated studio is that it gives the company an excellent excuse for having made a bad picture. What matter if the rest of the



*Le Tournoi (The Tournament)*, a new film by Jean Renoir, made for  
*La Société des Films Historiques et Jean de Merly*. Jackie Monnier  
and Eurique de Rivero.



From *Le Tournoi*, of Jean Renoir. A Jean de Merly film.





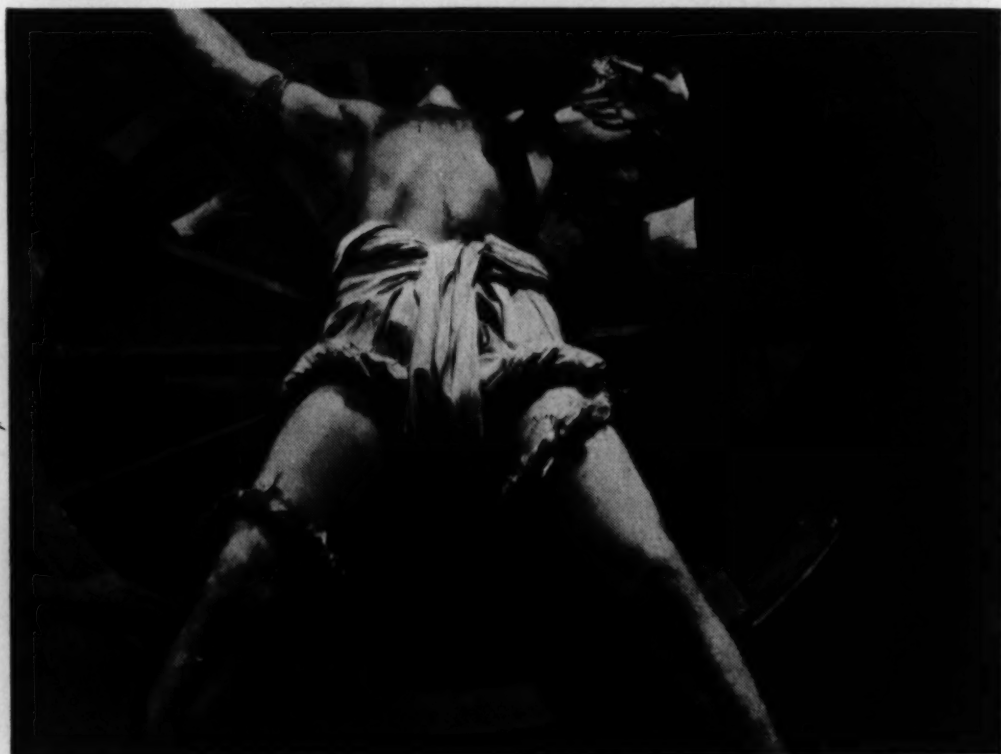


*Capitaine Fracasse*, a film by Alberto Cavalcanti, after the story by Theophile Gautier. Production : Lutece Film. Above Pierre Blanchar as Capitaine Fracasse.





*Capitaine Fracasse.* A film by Alberto Cavalcanti for Lutece Film. Chiquite (Pola Illery) goes to the rescue of Isabelle (Lien Dyers).



Agostin (Daniel Mendaille) on the wheel. From *Capitaine Fracasse*. A Lutece film.



What The Censor Bans ! *Cosmos (Nature and Love)*, shown intact even to the children of Europe, cannot be shown though carefully edited to adults of Great Britain. Well, the chimpanzees are certainly tempting.



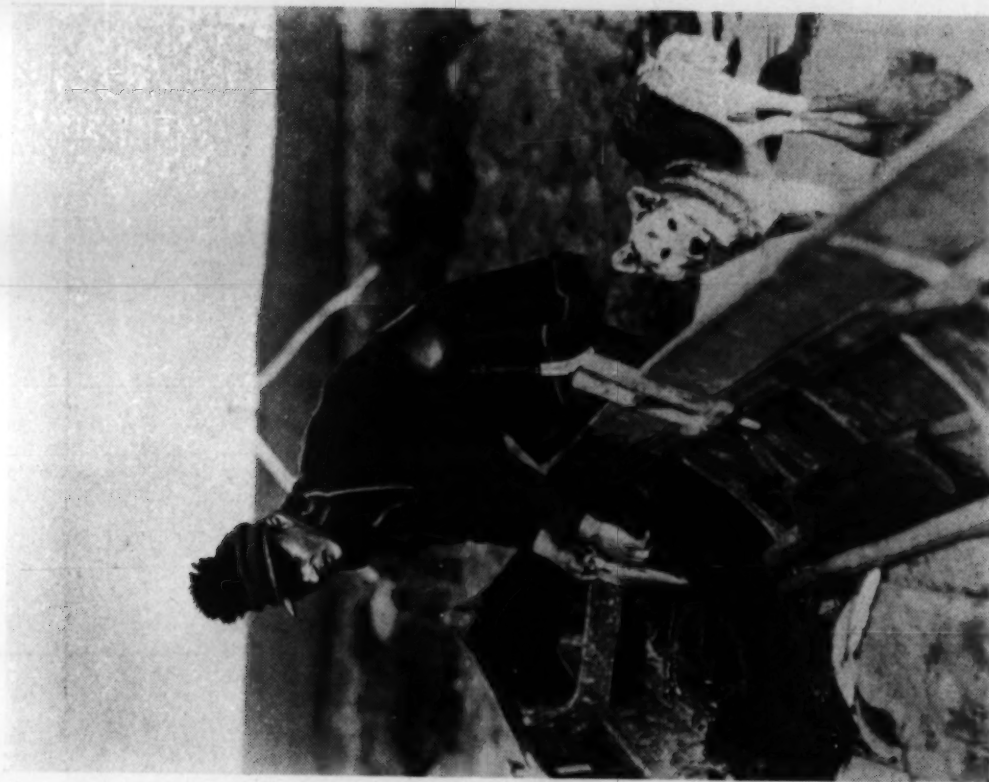
Photos: Ufa





From the film made in Lapland by two young Englishmen, Ben R. Hart and St. J. Clowes, for British Screen Productions. Photographs and an account of the film were in the February issue.





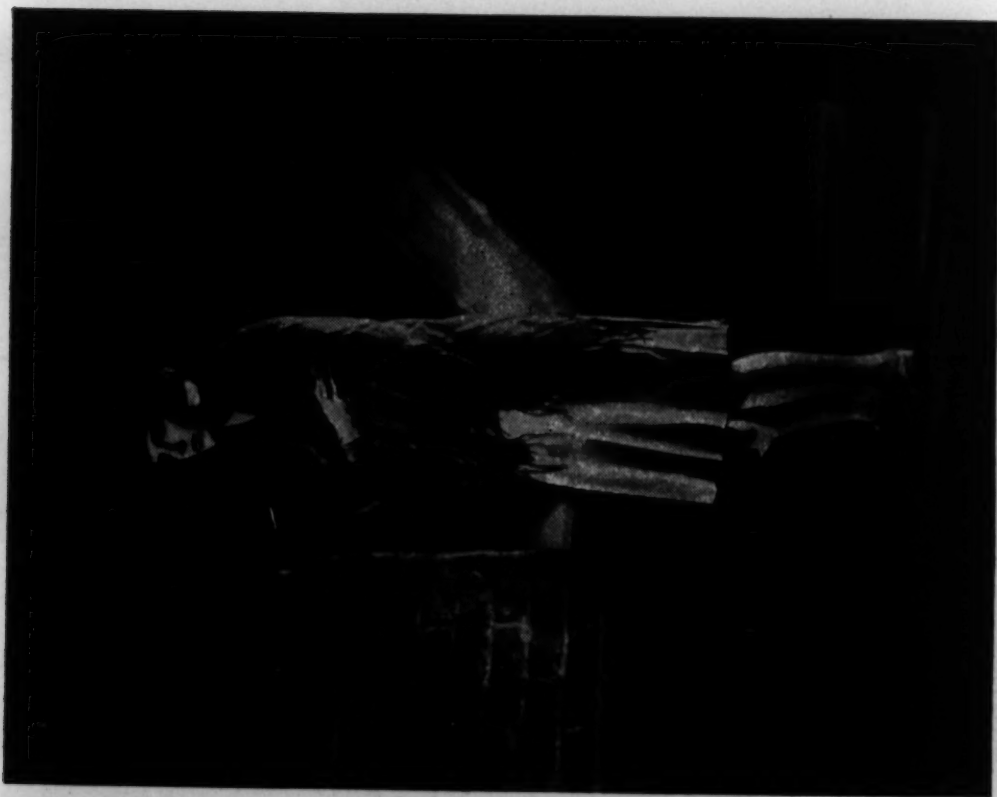
Lapp types from the British Screen Production's film made by Englishmen in Lapland. Since the Lapp believes that to be photographed is to sin, this is one of the very rare records (indeed the only one of its kind), yet made, and is, apart from everything else, a valuable piece of documentation.



*Pandora's Box*, Pabst's rendering of the book by Wedekind. Above, Louise Brooks as Lulu, and Gustav Diesel as Jack the Ripper. Below, Franz Lederer as Alwa Schön and Carl Goetz as Schigolch.







Lulu (left) Louise Brooks, and Schigolch (Carl Goetz) in *Pandora's Box*, which was passed by the German censors after a stormy discussion of several hours duration.



Eisenstein with his heroine, Martha Lapkina, and her child on the last day of the filming of *The General Line*, after which Martha forsook stardom for the soil.



Two views from *The General Line*. Above "Black Blood," below, the tractor makes its appearance. *The General Line* is made to reveal the wonders worked with machinery to the many dark villages throughout Russia.



ГЕНЕРАЛЬНАЯ ЛИНИЯ-





From *The General Line* by Eisenstein and Alexandroff.



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world argues the pros and cons of panchromatic? We can still carry on with one or the other all the same. Our patron Saint is the Vicar of Bray.

Stories are one of the difficulties. Even Wardour Street sees that. What is a film story? Is there such a thing? Should it be "national"? Or "international"? Must it have a name? Must it have sex appeal?

How to film; that is the question. We are undoubtedly in a position to make progress. But where? Is it to be Hollywood or Leningrad? Or Elstree? "National" or "International"?

If only Wardour Street could finish its mental battle and make up its mind.

And "talkies"? No, it is too much. At the mention of the word your Wardour Street production oracle folds his hands over his stomach like Bacchus and silently passes away.

HUGH CASTLE.

## THE ENGLISH CINEMA

England sits atop her globe looking down upon her dominions.

England hoped to sit as neatly upon her quota and look down upon far-flung film dominions. But the eye of England is on the U.S.A. cinema, the cinema of the presumptuous

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American offspring. There is little talk of cinema in England, but a great deal of talk of movie. That is, the questions of film conduct refer almost entirely to : how can we duplicate and beat the American success? And, of course, the answers amount to : by playing the American game. Look through the pages of the film journals and you will see from editor to fan that the same concern is uppermost : America.

I was in England in 1926 when the quota was hot on its birth. A typically English sentiment was expressed by a paper, *The Patriot*, in the following words : " We hope, but do not expect, that the agitation over British films will arouse English people to the danger in their midst of American propaganda through the agency of American films. England is being suffocated by American films ; they lead in East and West and, thanks to our apathy, a promising English industry is being strangled before our eyes. The war, of course, was America's chance, and, with her genius for money-making quickened by the jealousy of English commercial supremacy, she grabbed it. England was fighting on every front throughout the world ; she had subordinated everything to the task ; her civil industrial life was in abeyance for nearly five years. America had a clear field. We are concerned now with only one branch of America's bid for world supremacy in trade, but there is no more progressive industry than the American film business. Money has been lavished upon its establishment, improvement and advertisement. The film magnates take their business seriously, and they plan ahead. No sooner does one film company produce a masterpiece (treating of American affairs one instinctively reaches out for superlatives) than every other company immediately



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strains every muscle to achieve a super-masterpiece. In detail and in representation the American films have been brought to a high pitch of perfection. We do not grudge this tribute to America's sole art." The slur must be there with the praise (the crude, aristocratic gallantry of the Englishman): the movie is America's *sole* art. But what is particularly England's art to-day?

Various objections were raised at that time to the American film, but the fore-quoted writer advances his hilarious one. "The historical films have for their motive the belittling of the Monarchy as an institution." Dear Patriot, to so libel my America, my Monarchy-idolizing America. The American movie to be accused of aiming to destroy the English throne! Perhaps the accusation is symbolic. Since the throne depends upon the commerce of the Empire, and the American movie threatens that commerce in numerous ways, the throne is threatened. But I attribute the accusation to petulance, the same petulance with which America has been charged. Indeed, the U.S.A. is in many ways, in many of her most unlovely ways, still the child of her mother.

Petulance, however, builds nothing so positive as either an industry or an art. And England in the cinema is following not the art or the industry of the movie, but all its commercial processes, with their involvements of nepotism, braggart expenditures, favoritism, exploitation of personalities (the star system), duplication of successes, etc. Well, Napoleon called England a shopkeeping nation. Indeed, the aristocracy has surprising shopkeepers' traits—those traits usually attributed

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to shopkeepers. A little while ago no gentleman (as gentleman is understood in England only) would go to the movie, it was vulgar. To-day he finances the vulgarities of the films, and goes to see them. And he laments the fact that the English film cannot be as briskly vulgar as the American, which calls in the pence. We shall touch upon the "vulgus" later.

Writing in *The London Sunday Chronicle*, 1926, its editor, Mr. J. W. Drawbell, epitomized the English attitude of mind which still prevails: "We are suffering from too much America! We hate Yankee bluff and bluster, but we stand for hours in queues to see American films that distort our own war efforts. . . . We are fools if we delude ourselves that we have nothing to learn from these same people, at whom we rather look down our noses. We have too little of American enthusiasm and freshness; the dogged, determined will to work; the tireless driving energy and the daring, virile ideas that lie behind the success of her vast campaign." And does England think that mere wishing will give her these qualities? And does she think that by duplicating the evidences or results, the shadows of these results, of these qualities, she will do what America has done? The mistake is in her thinking at all about America. She must probe herself. If she fails to create the greatest cinema, and here I am shifting to my interest of the cinema that is art, she must find that failure in herself, in the Englishman, and she must be satisfied with what lesser thing she can offer.

Art is experience. I do not mean the workaday experience that is easily acquired, but the experience which is the systematic being. The Russian movie began at once with



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experience, for the Russian is the most experiencing of men, and therefore you have a Russian film of such grand proportions. The American movie has been one of gay, muscular adventure, superficial if pleasant; to-day it is making weary, ineffective attempts to attain to experience, as in *The Crowd* and *Lonesome*. Experience can be attained to only if experience has been the source. The Americans are not notably an experiencing people; in this they are kin to the English.

The Englishman is afraid of experience. He is suspicious of emotion. I am not now referring to the English "vulgar", but to the more knowing, the literati. The uniform reaction to Dreyer's *Jeanne* was almost funny in its commentary upon the English fear of tears, the pseudo-Nietzschean disparagement of pity. (The analogy to Nietzsche was suggested to me by an Englishman. There are still Nietzscheans among the English, I am told. Well, the English are a warrior nation.) Dostoevsky, the most cosmic of writers, embraced pity as the completest of human contacts: thereby is man-in-the-universe discovered. There is a direct relation between Dostoevsky and the Russian cinema.

There have been expressions in *The Film Weekly*, of London, of the English need for Russian films, and the need for English directors to learn from the Russians. There has been talk by a number of more open-minded Britons of the urgent necessity of importing talents to fashion films in England. If one is interested in a competent and competing cinema perhaps importation is acceptable, though its value is questionable, when one looks at the outcome of Stiller, of America, of the effect of Lubitsch's "touches" on the American film (a false charm). And as to learning from the



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Russians or from any one, what is one to learn? A camera angle, such as America learned from *Vaudeville*, and, in its utilization, confused further an already confused milieu? Here is a lesson to learn from America, since England wants to learn from America: if you are going to use an approach of another people, be sure you have the receptivity to incorporate that approach into your established attitude. The lesson to learn from the Russian film is: find your source.

Mr. Anthony Asquith determined to do a film of the lowly. Good. The Germans had established such themes as their particular contribution to cinema subject-matter. Mr. Asquith opened up with underground train lights, very reminiscent, perhaps learned from the Germans or the French absolutists. Mr. Asquith may deny this, he has even expressed himself rather condescendingly, if kindly, upon German and Russian films. But what was the experience of an unprejudiced mature spectator to *Underground*? A hybrid film produced by a coincidence of absence of a precise cinema viewpoint and a remoteness from the lives of the protagonists of the narrative. Mr. Asquith is a case in point: he is young and, let us assume, he is willing to learn. He is given at once, in the American fashion, a "big" film to do, instead of being put on a small, personal "errand". If it is London he wishes to film, why not grant him some corner, Petticoat Lane, or Trafalgar Square? Let him sketch with his camera the Regent Quadrant. The film document is the legitimate exercise: it is a test and an education. Could Mr. Asquith do as capable, if unpretentious, a film as M. Georges Lacombe's *La Zone*? This training is vital in two ways: in its demands upon the understanding of life and its

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requisitions upon a cinema viewpoint. Instead of such training, Mr. Adrien Brunel's does hobbadahoy parodies of the newsreel, without revealing any cinema instinct or sense of pertinent commentary. One conceit alone remains with me: the use of musical notes to represent insects in flight. I am aware when I suggest the documentary film as apprenticeship that London authorities are still hostile to having their city exposed. Yet the Honorable Anthony Asquith filmed the underground. Moreover, one may construct a document about the contents of a room, although this may call for a penetration denied most people. The end to be willed is the attainment of a viewpoint. Of course, the documentary film transfixed by a genius like Flaherty can become something beyond a document. In this instance, however, I am not thinking of a completely converted material but of a training. I am thinking not of the work, although the work may prove most meritorious, but of the one to be educated. Is England serious enough in its cinema intentions to educate its worthy young men? Or does she think that the building of studio cities is more necessary?

In this matter of studios England is again aping America, without realizing that Hollywood is one of the chief obstacles hindering the advance of the American film. The day of the studios is over. Mr. Charles Lapworth, an Englishman who is production manager for the Société Générale des Films, producers of *Jeanne d'Arc*, urged his company against the studio. The European cinema has all Europe and northern Africa for its studio, and England has the globe. If the studio is needed, it can, as in the fashion of France, be rented for the time desired. To maintain studios is to have the pace



set by the overhead expenses, and not by the director, as is the policy of the Société Générale.

Joining the idea of document and the idea of the circulating "studio", I approach the suggestion which seems to me to offer a way to English cinema. I would certainly centre the film industry in London, to keep it near the active critical opinion yet to be fully articulated. (The English artist, literary and graphic, is, in typical English fashion, still indifferent to the movies—although from the start of the motion picture, the French artist was curious, even enthusiastic. It is true, Mrs. Virginia Woolf and Mr. Aldous Huxley have expressed themselves upon the need of the films, but their very general and repetitious judgments were evidence of a non-participation.) But the English countryside offers the documentary zone for the apprentice, the natural setting for film placement, and the peculiar English contribution to the cinema theme. This was hinted in Mr. Alfred Hitchcock's cinematization of Philpott's *The Farmer's Wife*. Perhaps after a long experience of this material and environment there will be developed from the source an experience which will be able to convert such a novel as Hardy's *The Mayor of Casterbridge* into a film. But in going to the source the English director must first understand that pictorialization is not conversion. In the film, *Widdicombe Fair*, a typical American narrative as major plot was threaded by a dull literal pictorialization of the old ballad, after which the film was named. This sort of illustration-song parallel belongs to the magic lantern era, which, in many ways, the film has not yet left behind. But to have taken the sense, the native



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sense, of the ballad and by re-rendering that sense in a structure suggested by the ballad-structure, to have attained what may be called a ballad-film, would have been an achievement and the establishment of an English idiom. I do not mean parody, such as Cavalcanti so pleasantly attained in *La P'tite Lilie*. I am again stressing conversion.

The English ballads and the English dances offer a source. There are more suggestions for filming at the Children's Theatre, near Shaftesbury Avenue, than on the stage where Tallullah Bankhead rants. The English music-hall is another tremendous opportunity. How early the English Cinema could have learned this, if it had listened to Mr. Alexander Bakshy, who anticipated what I am saying many a year ago? Why did the English cinema let this prophet of the motion picture escape to America? Bakshy might have given English films their first-needed impetus. But the English cinema may still benefit by what Mr. Bakshy said long ago: that cinema performance "is the most abstract form of pantomime", and should be left "to the dancers, clowns and acrobats who do know something about the laws of movement". This is a recognition almost oracular in view of what has transpired: the success of the dancer, the clown and the acrobat. Englishmen are always indicating the English origin of Chaplin, and Lane, and others, are always hinting that America benefited by the war in taking these artists into the films. But what is England doing in regard to other good and qualified artists, Beatrice Lillie, for instance? Instead of going to the musical hall to discover both performers and forms, the English film-producer puffs a Mr. Alexandre d'Arcy as "the new Valentino" or expends

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tons of publicity on a Mr. Carl Brisson. Playing the American game, and getting where? The source of all art is in the "vulgus". Shakespeare is to be found in The Shepherd's Play and Gammer Gurton's Needle and Ralph Royster-Doyster. By the way, these are splendid film subject-matter. The art of the film is to be found in the distortions of the excellent English music-hall, or in the genre themes of the countryside and London, or in the old ballads and dances—these are the sources. Comparing English stars to American will only further obscure the logical players in the variety houses of England. Talking, like Mr. Asquith, that treatment and not plot counts will only, in its demi-truth, obscure the essential convertible and suggestive content which lies at the fingers of the English cinema. It is not plot, Mr. Asquith, it is content, subject-matter, the human theme, that must be talked of, and the treatment (or, as I prefer to call it, the cinematic viewpoint) in relation to this content is Conception. English films lack Conception. Your indifference, Mr. Asquith, to the plot, as you term it, allowed *Underground* to begin as a light superficial comedy (which, I think, you should have kept it), pass into the idyllic, the quasi-pathetic, the arrantly melodramatic, so that it was nothing as an experience and unreal as a revelation of the people it purported to represent. There was no indication of the insinuation of their Underground existence in their lives. Just to have had certain adventures occur in the Underground does not allow you to offer your film as a document of the lives of the Underground people. You did not experience these people, your experience of these people would have been the "plot"



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which you scorn. You are very old-fashioned in your progressiveness, Mr. Asquith.

I am sure that by now we do not need to be warned against the novelist or the novel in the films. We know that the unselective borrowing of novels for film-narratives has been baneful, and was brought in as a practice by the film commercialist. But we know also that, given the mind for it, anything is convertible into film. However, the selection must be based, among other things, in the case of England, on the English experience. What I have said before will explain my present point. If there is no one (and it seems there is no one) in the English cinema able to create a subject-matter of this experience, there are subject-matters waiting in many novels: those of Thomas Hardy, for instance. And will not someone go to Scotland and do *The House with the Green Shutters*? Or to Ireland and do *The Playboy of the Western World*? Or to the English mines and do *Sons and Lovers*? Or to Australia and do the novels of E. Grant Watson? The Russians have never bickered about original plots, but at once seized upon existent "experiences" published in novels: *Polikouschka* and *Mother*. I am afraid no one in England's cinema is up to the dimensions of even the least of the books I have mentioned. Perhaps it is wiser to depend upon the novels or plays of an Eden Philpotts, until the conviction of sufficient power impels the director to attempt grander themes. But the English must not expect the rest of the world to wax violently enthusiastic over her first films-at-source. The world will find them pleasing, because they will be peculiar to the folk enacting them. But I am not interested in their appeal or selling-power, I am interested



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in placing the stress at the right place, away from a nostalgia for American success. What is the good of taking a director like T. Hayes Hunter, who in America was responsible for a film as worthy as *Earthbound*, if in England he is accredited with two banal films like *The Triumph of the Scarlet Pimpernel* and *One of the Best*? Or an actor like Monty Banks, hardly the brightest of the comedians, and permitting him to film such wretched stuff as *Gin and It*? Or a Mr. Harry Lachman and having him do *Week-End Wives*, which has all the details of American high (hat) comedy and none of the gaiety? Or worrying about the "it-less" English girl? What is the value of the numerous amateur cinematographic societies—working with normal and 16 m/m stock—if immediately they are concerned with camera tests, scenarios, thrillers, etc., and evidently are playing for the attention of the large producer? I believe I have indicated possible procedures for the serious English cinema. Certainly, even as far as monetary success is concerned, what I have suggested could hardly be less profitable than most English films produced under the suasion of the present state of mind.

HARRY ALAN POTAMKIN.

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### A CRY FROM CAMBRIDGE

Here we are, a University Town with six cinemas, and only eight per cent. of the films for the Lent Term (Mid January to Mid March) are worth seeing.

It is, we believe, the practice of the managers of theatrical touring companies to give close consideration to the taste of the towns which it is convenient for them to visit. Would that cinema managers and distributors of the films might confer together and grade towns according to their mentality. The cinema managers are content to exhibit the type of film which has been successful for many years, when a little thought would show them the type of film which *could* be successful were it only exhibited. Were it not for Undergraduate audiences the Cambridge cinemas might close down, and these audiences are credited with being intellectual. Why, then, is it that the men who eagerly go to the Festival Theatre, the most progressive theatre in England, to see the brilliant plays of Shaw, the Capek brothers, Gordon Bottomley, Eugene O'Neill, and a host of others, must see the films most of which are "tripe"?

There is the film, a bad film when one thinks of, say *The Italian Straw Hat*, but which one must enjoy as a gay *scherzo*. Any of Clara Bow's pieces is an example. This is admirable

and naturally appreciated at Cambridge. But we are surfeited with the film which "does not quite come off". And yet again we get here the film which depends for its attraction on a nudity, lingering caresses, or a bedroom scene. Crowds go for the sake of shots possessing these attractions. But it is all so boring!

Then, rare concessions at rarer intervals, we have had *The Student of Prague*, *Faust*, *The Circus*, *The Spy*, and *Dawn*. And the cinemas showing these films have been packed to overflowing.

Thus Cambridge tastes the pleasures of an occasional good film; perhaps, for some days afterwards, the other films seem thin and poor. But it does not last, we are soon off again to see Gertrude Garbage in *Silk Legs*. This is not because we are really attracted by the film, but because there is no alternative style.

How utterly ridiculous it is that a University Town conversant with the most modern methods of theatrical production, accustomed to listening to eminent men, and accustomed to reading and discussing the newest and cleverest books, should submit to seeing these celluloid imbecilities. Fifty miles away, in London, good films are being shown and we will either never see them, or not see them for as much as a year to come.

Heaven knows we cannot hope to see the very advanced Russian and German films in Cambridge, but serious films which come next to them are our right as highly intelligent and highly critical audiences. We should see them as soon as they are generally released.

J-G.



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# CENSORSHIP AND CULTURE

The author of this essay, Mr. Vernon J. Clancey, recently edited, with Professor Julian Huxley, the Ufa film *Cosmos* (*Natur und Liebe*), which has now been passed by the censor.

We insular folk of England tend to think of our problems as relating to ourselves alone. Our ideas on censorship are generally based on its relations with our own particular conditions; but there is a much wider aspect of the question, its bearings on the development of culture. Particularly is this important in the case of films on account of their very wide appeal and their power of influencing the illiterate masses.

The whole basis of an advanced censorship is an appreciation of the social conditions and the ideology, together with the trend of culture of the community. The almost universal questions of indecency and pornography are minor items—moral codes attend to these. Admittedly, moral codes are artificial, based on custom and localised—as such they provide problems of national censorship, but these are unimportant problems.

The British Board of Film Censors, as representing the organisation of censorship in this country, usually manages to find a standard of decency acceptable to the majority. We

may be surprised at the amount of Vilma Banky's legs by which we are permitted to be disgusted in *The Awakening*, or cavil at some of his suggested cuts; but we appreciate the manner in which he navigates his Scylla and Charibdis—the renter and narrow-minded Victorianism. His is a difficult position, being appointed by the trade he must preserve his peace with their desire to get across scenes that sail as close to the wind as possible, but he must also attempt to please the puritan and maintain the trust of the licensing authorities.

It is, however, when he is faced with problems of culture that the impossibility of the present constitution is apparent. I do not want to rehash the late *Dawn* controversy except to quote it as an example of one of the major censorship problems. Similarly the recent banning of the scientific film *Cosmos*, since passed with further deletions, brings to the fore the question of the censorship of an instructional film. These, with the even more important banning of the Russian films—in particular *Potemkin*, *Mother* and *The End of St. Petersburg*, which were shown by the Film Society—have made urgent a discussion of the basis on which these decisions were made.

If we, and I think we must, accept the lay press, the serious press, not the sensation mongers, as an expression of the views of their readers, there is a very strong party urging the freedom of the screen—agitating its removal from the field of politics. In the case of *Dawn* the controversy hung around its possible effect on our peaceful relations with our late enemy. Naturally, this raised a storm of protest against sacrificing truth to international politics, thereby focussing attention on a “red-herring”. Similarly we are informed that the

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Russian films were banned by reason of their revolutionary tendencies—that they were, in effect, Bolshevik propaganda, and as such are unsuitable for general exhibition in this country.

*It is impossible for a minority to regulate social evolution by such artificial means.*

The appeal of a film, or any art, to the masses is determined by the extent to which it formulates and expresses the undefined ideology of the majority. The appeal of Valentino lay not in his person, but in his expression of the ideals and the unsatisfied desires of spinsterdom. Mix, Jones, Gibson and the "Westerns" in general, appeal as an expression of the vital and spaciousness of the traditional West—an inherent in the majority.

If the theme of a "revolutionary" film is an expression of the present ideology of the workers of this country, then it will have popular appeal, and the banning of it because a minority think that it is a false ideology, is tantamount to autocracy and is not popular censorship. No use saying that the uneducated masses are misled by such portrayals, that they would have created in them foreign hates and new social conceptions. If the germs of the ideas are non-existent in the minds of the people, the films will not appeal, and if the germs are there no artificial guidance by a superior bureaucrat will prevent their expression.

I hold no brief for those who claim that the Russian films should be admitted here on the grounds of their artistic (meaning "arty") merits. True, they have many points of interest, but the cult of Futurism, the exotics, the pessimists, the skepticists, who flourish in the little theater movement



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and yowl in their societies, deify the Russians, Pudovkin, Eisenstein and the rest, and forget that æsthetic interest is not sufficient claim for the general exhibition of a film.

The problem of censorship is the problem of establishing a cultural and social basis from which to work, based on present and progressive culture and sociology. If the tenets of evolution are the expression of present beliefs, even if unformed, of the mass, then show them evolution in their films. If Bolshevism finds a place in the ideology of the people, then no banning of cinematic expression will stay its progress. This is the foundation on which construction must rest. Leave questions of indecency, lust and immorality alone, they are taking care of themselves.

VERNON J. CLANCEY.

## STORM OVER LONDON

After the deluge, me. Or, in other words, Pudovkin was in London. And London during that period lived up to its visitor and was far more Pudovkinish than he was. By Pudovkinish meaning the factory owner and his nails, the cigar (contrasting with the O so fagged end of the worker) and the judges in *Mother*, the woman growing hysterical behind the grapes in *St. Petersburg* and the fussy woman in

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*Storm Over Asia.* I mean, there was the lady behind me at the Film Society busily collecting her wraps and reticules and whatnots until she discovered that they were playing *Send Him Victorious*, when she had to sit down and wait till it was over before she could resume, by this gesture asserting individual rights at great individual discomfort; and there were the people who were so pleased at knowing what a Soviet was or that it was something, that they had to cheer, thus doing their best to prevent the films from Russia being allowed here ever. All this very Pudovkinish. And then, questions in the House after, and visas and the whole thing and finally seeing and trying to see and meeting Pudovkin himself, so that, as I said, after the deluge, me, and a rather bedraggled one.

What did he think of it all? Well, how could I ask? There is a destiny which rules out tongues, release them how we will. But he did tell me that he had seen *The Singing Fool*. I should have liked to have seen that. I like the idea of Bataleff and "sonnyboy", Kerensky and Al Jolson, as it were. But, of course, Pudovkin wasn't bothered about that. Saw through, to the noise. Did the same with *The Awakening*. If only more people would. We might get somewhere, instead of hanging around, waiting for him to. What else? He had asked Western Electric about distorting noise for him. Could they do that? They were engineers. They had never thought of it. They were a little surprised, a little, but deferentially, of course, troubled at the idea, which they had never thought of. After they were trying to get noise as natural, as lifelike, as all those things as possible. Mr. Pudovkin wanted them to give him noise that hadn't



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been made, that hadn't been heard, that didn't exist. That had only been thought of, and imagined. How many things to do with the sound film, except its invention, have been imagined? How many imaginations are possessed by those who have to do with sound films as we know or refuse to know them? Haven't most people just hurriedly exploited whatever method they got in on as fast as they could, while the rest sniff, scorn, turn away from it, being ever so modern and intellectual and, in fact, just the same as the people who first of all wouldn't accept the cinema? And here is Pudovkin being imaginative about sound films. Seeing them in relation to the future, and not as bearing on his present work. Studying them, not rushing in to make his next one one, but perhaps the one after. That's all very well for an artist, but us business men, we've got to get in first, we've got our wives to keep (I forgot to ask Pudovkin if he had a wife). Well, the two most paying and popular films in Berlin at the moment are Pudovkin's two latest, and you can keep that, brother, in your head for the whole of the rest of this article. Pudovkin's films aren't "art", as you know it (*The Last Moment*), but works. And work satisfies an inner need. That is one of its purposes. And the other is to satisfy the outer ones, too. Get that. Pudovkin's films make money. And he happens to study before he makes them, and now he is studying sound films. Then, what will happen? He foreshadowed some of it in his speech to the Film Society after, and he had already foreshadowed what one may call the Russian idea in the Statement with Eisenstein and Alexandroff in *Close Up* for last October. And I shall foreshadow some more (Oh, yes, taking it upon myself again. Really,



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this Herring person) in Sound Imagery. But here are two things he observed in that speech, reprinted from *Cinema*. "The expressionism of the film can reach unthought-of heights," and "but one must never show on the screen a man and reproduce his word exactly synchronised." This is an echo of "The first experiments with sound must be directed towards its pronounced non-coincidence with the visual images." Now this and this kind of thing that you get from him, talking English and German, are sparks. Catch them, see what they make. Sparks fly up the Eiffel Tower, fall, spell CITROEN. Catch the sparks and make them

## SOUND IMAGERY.

Of course, this cannot be like my other articles on film imagery. We have had so few sound films in which any imagery has been used, or has occurred, and that has been accidental. I was glad of Mr. Hay Chowl's remarks on *The Melody of Love*. There was a hint in that film of something that might mean something about the sound. Something had been done with it that hadn't been done before, and it was a new way. But most people who saw it just pointed out that Mildred Harris was bad in it, as if she hadn't been bad in plenty of silent films, and alleged that it was a sound quickie with inserts from an old *Laura la Plante* film. I do not see her, unless she is directed by Leni, so I could not tell. But I did think there was a hint, a very shy and gawky one, of a kind of sound impressionism. And in *Interference* there was a use of the telephone which was obvious enough, but it had not been done before, and if it was done now, what might not be done quite soon? So an article on sound imagery

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must remain a series of sparks in the dark, with only suggestions in place of instances. And the suggestions were fanned by seeing Pudovkin and by a talk I had with Edmund Meisel. A great director, a brilliant composer. Both studying sound film problems. Neither accepting nor rejecting sound films, and not being clever; but taking the problem and studying it.

Now, I thought I was being quite clever in suggesting that I did not want to see and hear a person doing the same thing. It was enough to see one and hear the other, and in June, before I had seen a talkie, I instanced the trick of the telephone, image of one person, voice of the other. Say what you like, cling hard to the blacks and the whites, this positively helps them. It gets on. Flashing from one to other in a telephone conversation is the best of a bad job. So is, really, contrasting lunch hour with a monkey eating, in *Berlin*. Circumventing "a number of seemingly hopeless blind alleys". If noise can do quickly and easily what with only pictures you would take a lot of footage to get across, obviously sound is helping you get on with your images. The design, the rhythm is upset less often. I thought of this watching *Simba*, where Mr. Martin Johnson spoke while Mrs. M. J. traced on a map with the finger that was later to be so doughty in pulling triggers. But my sound was quite literal. The arrival of people not yet seen, the noise of traffic, the tunes that come into one's mind and remembered voices. But Pudovkin gets right down, not to the literal thing, but to the common thing between sight and sound, and the common thing they share is not the matching of what we see and hear. Pudovkin would combine the fury of an angry man with the roar of a lion. Think what that means.



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Think also of the oral underlining, very slightly, of the subtleties made possible. Apart from the already remarked on concentration on images. The etching in of sound, and that sound not literal sound, but imagery, too. Does not this mean something we want to have? And does it not mean something that, as Pudovkin said, the control of sound would be the director's? He would control that, too. And now to Herr Meisel, who told me that the music to *Berlin* was composed at the same time as the film. Sound and film are contrapuntal. What Pudovkin says, again. The new tag is obviously going to be "contrapuntal". There was "superimposed". Most people found that they had really been meaning "mix", so they clawed at "cutting" when that was heard of, and were very smart with it, until they began to suspect others of meaning "editing" and then found that that was what they themselves had been meaning all the time. And what will happen to "Contrapuntal"? Centrifugal? Never mind. They make a nice noise, and we might include them in our own sound film. Meisel declares that the score of a film must be composed with the film. That was how *Berlin* was composed. It must be thought of with the film. Director *and* composer, like that. And by score, Meisel means sound, too. In Germany, he has made gramophone records of sounds of engines. Sound must be composed, says Meisel.

Read that. And now, praise the Lord, I want you all to stand up and say, "I believe that sound must be composed". Isn't that grand? Isn't that a wonderful sight? Sound can't be ordered: you can't go to your sound man and say, "This is Paris, we want half a dozen of the shrillest hooters".



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You can't order it in, as from Clarksons, so many Beau Brummel suits, so many Dresden Shepherdesses. You can't have hooters to match the houses and synchronise whistles to match the newsboy and go with every shot of an old man drinking soup. That won't do. Not a bit. You take trouble, if you are a director, about what is photographed. You take even more trouble, if you are a cameraman, about how it is photographed. There are plenty of streets. You choose one. Or from five or six you take bits and CREATE one. There are lots and lots of street noises. It is foolish to take them in a bunch and throw them alongside your chosen and selected street. And then your street may be in the slums of Paris, but it may feel all lilac. What use is a hooter here, unless to call back to reality, which is imagery of another kind? You must get a lilac sound.

Hospital nurses chattering don't want a faithful "And I said to him 'no kisses with aprons on'". They want bits of bright tin jangling together and things swinging on chains and windows going up and down. All very Sitwellian, like those candles. That lady who rushes into a room, destroying everything by her presence, so that you curl up and wrap into yourself, slide away and save what you can . . . she does not need the rustle of silks, nor even jackals braying. She wants fire-engine bells, don't you see. The subtlety, though that isn't, you can get. You can keep a face regarding politely someone, and have such remarks going on. Undercurrents, echoes, imagery. Looking at it one way, seeing it one way, hearing it another. Hearing it by association. The behindness of things can be reached. The visual part of the cinema

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will be freed from the dramatic and literary necessities which have held it back.

Wyndham Lewis has discovered that the world, as the result of modern (what a funny word) inventions, has become all one place, "instead of a romantic tribal patchwork of places". If only some would realise this when one spoke of Russian films, those, too, to whom half the point is, secretly, that they are Russian, instead of good. He continues to observe that thereupon a world art became necessary, that its organisation is difficult until there is a political world-unity (and here, with *The King Who Was a King*, Mr. Wells steps in where Arnold fears to tread), and that our transition period offers "hopeless obstacles to any expansion on a grand scale" in "especially in pictorial and plastic art". This is where Pudovkin and Meisel think about beginning to step in.

The whole trend of modern art is towards unifying. The visible world, once split up into human beings and sticks and stones, all express the one truth. The link between you and table . . . that is modern, for God's sake let's say *our* art. The essential undifference, save in degree, between knife and sky. René Magritte draws a key, a glass and a guitar and writes below "L'océan, l'oiseau, l'arbre", and that isn't just amusing. Chirico, in one of the most subconscious paintings London has seen, paints a room, an ordinary room, with a sea breaking across the floor and a tree growing, you can see that, in a corner, and it is all quite right. We understand it. It answers us. The Sitwells do it with the senses, using one to express the other, with their shrill flowers and woollen donkey's ears and all. You know, "Jane, Jane, tall as a crane, the morning light creaks down again". And



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Pudovkin, take his angry man and roaring lion. You see him angry, so you know that. He is in fury. And fury itself is brought out, reached, by the lion, the most furious noise. Man and lion meet in fury. Fury in the abstract. We get it through man, lion. Fundamentals, if you like. That's the new cinema, or the full cinema. Two arms instead of one. On top of this trend, there is the cinema. Right from the start, before imagery was realised, it made no difference between woman and wall. It ALLOWED no difference. They were both image. As I said over Seastrom, lover and landscape both participate, belong, answer and express the same thing. We are aware of one in the other, this in this and this over this, till can we really be sure which we are seeing except that we are seeing what is there, and the parts don't matter, though they are exquisite? It is the same that inspires the Roman Catholic to see divinity in the bread, and the puritan, because he sees evil everywhere, to see it in a silk stocking. Therefore, why bother to hear Amiée Macpherson in a talkie, when what we want to fit her is a good business talk from Mr. Selfridge? When sound is grasped, you will be able to use it so quietly, so lightly, so overwhelmingly. All the sounds there are at the service of your pictures. And even before he starts, Pudovkin is thinking of sounds that are not, yet. He will distort sound, and Meisel is going to compose sound straight. Take the oral impact of two objects and compose it in the same way as the visual impact is composed. He is going to make a new kind of music. He can manipulate the lamp which makes the sound waves light waves on the film. And others go on making hundred per cent. squawkies and don't care in the least that



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the reproduction is still about as bad as an early gramophone. They want just to be literal, like the radio, and give us life or something odd like that. It does not matter how odd you are if you are literal. You make Al Jolson, how I love him, sing a song that makes the real audience at the Regal weep and dab, and you show the audience to whom he is supposed to have sung it to in the film rise up and cheer wildly and have a grand time, and the two audiences are quite at variance in their reactions to the same song, and the makers don't mind because it is all literal. But if, at the same time, you are neither odd nor literal, if you are logical, let alone psychological, they are up in arms. And what is the noise for that on a sound film? Wild beasts, gladiators, weapons rattling? Far too literal. How about "exit only, old clothes only, exit only, old clothes only" superimposed on to cries of "been in this business since I don't understand please mummy why, the Lord said unto Moses". Wells, I put it to you. This is your next book. After explaining what a good one it is, you lay the scenes. *The Police of the World*. Paul alone in Hyde Park. Noises of champagne corks and money clinking."

But Wells would superimpose Mrs. Meyrick on this, and he really means "mix", and I really meant to talk about Pudovkin. He said this, he said that. What did he think of English films? Would he like to make a film of a Cup Tie? He said this, he said that. But he DID this and this to me. Isn't that more exciting? Can't you imagine for yourselves from this what a talk with him would be? What it would do to you. Do you really want to know whether he likes being directed by Ozep, what he thinks of Anna Sten, if he minds

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his films being banned here, what lighting he uses, is Russia nice to live in? He spent a lot of time seeing old Chaplins he hadn't seen before, he saw a bit of *Q Ships*, but he really spent most of his time here being allowed here. It was very Pudovkinish. But think of sound imagery in his terms, and thank yourself that you are alive, if you are.

ROBERT HERRING.

## INTERVIEW WITH HERR MEISEL

Owing to a fortunate meeting with Henry Dobb, of the *Sunday Worker*, and the perennial hospitality of Mr. Ogilvie, of the Avenue Pavilion, I had the pleasure to meet Herr Meisel at a midnight try-out of *Berlin* on January 28th, which the Avenue is reviving the following week.

It is well known that Herr Meisel is the composer of the musical setting in entirety of *Berlin*, *Ten Days* and *Potemkin*. It is, perhaps, less well known that in his earnestness that *Berlin* symphony shall be faithfully interpreted as he desires, Herr Meisel has specially come over to London. Mr. Ogilvie, in introducing Dobb and myself, spoke of the present being his fourth visit, the intention being that as the composer played, Mr. Grigg—the Pavilion organist—should study the

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score at his elbow. A few words of greeting and we were trundling along on the early morning local train to Berlin.

A few seconds after the aerodrome searchlight flashed in synchrony with the final chords on the piano, Herr Meisel was apologising for his digital delinquencies. But apart from the difficulty of doing justice to some passages of the score without an orchestra or an organ; Mr. Ogilvie, too, was equally apologetic for the shortcomings of his piano.

But being one of a group of three or four, alone in the centre of an otherwise empty hall, with *Berlin* on the screen and Herr Meisel sitting sentinel over its musical destiny, has to be experienced to be fully appreciated.

Benefiting a great deal from Mr. Dobb's fluid conversational manner of enquiry, we heard a host of interesting things from the little man, with an almost elfin humour, and as much enthusiasm, apparently, for the art of the films as for the art of his own sphere.

The subject of music and the films veered.

"What did Herr Meisel think of *Potemkin*?"

"They have a great future . . . synchronised music would always be part of the film. The music would be the same in the cinema that can afford a full orchestra as in the tiny provincial hall with only a piano."

When it was suggested that *Berlin* was the first essay in truly synchronised film he smiled appreciatively, but was silent.

"Did he limit his meaning of synchronised sound to 'effects' and 'orchestration'?"

"Well, no . . . the voice, too, will improve a film when used for *contrapunct*, as we say in music. Imagine the



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moment in *Potemkin* when the command is given to Fire! The orchestration should fade out as the moment approaches and from the silence the voice would speak out the word, loud and staccato. The effect would be tremendous and dramatic. But it is most important that the scenarist, the composer, the director and the producer should decide in committee where exactly music, where effects, and where vocal contrapunct is to be synchronised in a given film, so that it is included in the script, *before work on the floor is begun*.

"The full-length talking picture has a doubtful future, but if it comes it will be serious for the theatre."

"What did Herr Meisel think of *Potemkin*?"

The disparity between his command of English and the immensity of his feeling about this film found expression in his shining eyes and wide-spread arms. He did manage sufficient voice to say: "Well, if you have not seen *Potemkin*, then you have not seen a film."

This naturally led to talk of Russian films.

"Did he think Russian films the greatest in the world?"

"Russian films," he said, "are very great films. They are so powerfully moving. The audiences are always half out of their seats, gripping the arms and backs of them with concentrated intensity of excitement. I am not Communist. And it is not the political. But Russian films are so full of the people. I have been to Russia and have talked with Pudowkin, Eisenstein and others. There they do things that are not possible anywhere else. If Pudowkin wants a thousand workpeople, he rings the telephone and in a short time a thousand workpeople are on the scene straight from

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their jobs. If Eisenstein should want some city scenes, a whole city is at his disposal at once.

"Everything is so interesting and alive in the films in Russia. Like the English, perhaps, they do not worry much about the importance of music in the films. But about the films they are very enthusiastic. The workers come from their building and their factory work of the daytime to take part in the films in their leisure hours of the evening. The result is all very wonderful."

"Is Herr Meisel scoring orchestral music for synchronising proper?"

There was mention of having recorded on discs for the German equivalent of our Gramophone company, and of having written a score for an UFA film, *The Holy Mountain*, released some time ago in England—silent, of course—under the title *Wrath of the Gods*. But there were so many others that, spoken with his German accent, they became jumbled and lost. One little film, with which he is assisting while in England, stands out, because in describing it his elfin humour seemed to be at its best.

He called the film a "Grotesque", and it is of the sea shantie "What shall we do with the Drunken Sailor". A sailor, drunk almost to incoherence, mumbles out the demand as to what shall be done with him. Other characters respond with more or less forceful action, while the birds and the trees, and each feature of the scenery in turn, even to the moon above, keeps up the refrain "What shall we do, etc.". The grotesque humour of this short subject seemed to delight Herr Meisel very much.

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Among a number of other interesting things he could talk of, Herr Meisel had seen the camera cinema, Studio twenty-eight, employing the multiplanar screen, and was very much impressed by its artistic possibilities in achieving realism.

But we were encroaching far upon the small hours of Tuesday morning, and though loth to do so, were compelled to depart with handshakes (muttering inadequate thanks) from a charming little man, so full of subdued keenness and suggestion for the future harmonious marriage of music with the films that one felt that he at least was entitled to think that the exploration of the art possibilities of the films is only just beginning.

HAY CHOWL.

## AN ASPECT OF CINEMA CONSTRUCTION

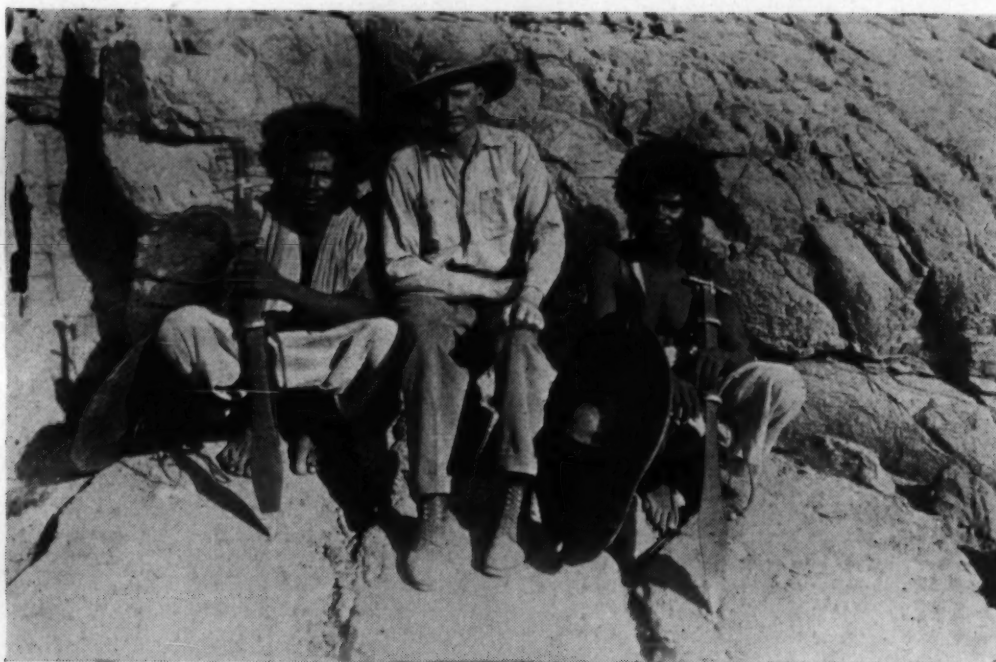
Having contrived a certain interval of leisure from my life of six years in the Japanese film world, I am now visiting Europe and America, by way of getting into touch with those personages with whom I have long been familiar through the screen. This has been my desire for many years indeed.

Fortunately for me, I had an opportunity to meet Mr. K. Macpherson, the Editor of *Close Up*, in Berlin.





A FIRST CLASS FIGHTING MAN.—This is one of the Fuzzy Wuzzys of the Red Sea Hills of Africa, made famous by Rudyard Kipling. This young man and thousands of his tribesmen appear in Paramount's adventure spectacle *The Four Feathers*, by Schoedsack and Cooper.



Merian C. Cooper, of the nomadic dramatic team of Cooper and Schoedsack, with two of the Red Sea Hills Fuzzy Wuzzys appearing in *The Four Feathers*, a Paramount film.



Cooper and Schoedsack spent over a year in Africa among these natives of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. A banjo effect is produced by the instrument shown here.



Douglas Fairbanks in *The Iron Mask*. Aramis—Gino Corrado, Athos—Leon Bary, Porthos—Stanley J. Sandford, D'Artagnan—Douglas Fairbanks, Cardinal Richelieu—Nigel de Brulier. A United Artists film.



A scene from *The Iron Mask*. Ulrich Haupt as De Rochefort, Lon Poff as Father Joseph, Nigel de Brulier as Richelieu. This film is the first to have a voice accompaniment to explain the action and speak the titles, in the manner of a Greek Chorus.





Yoshiko-Kawada, a Japanese star in *The Black-haired Demon*, a film by J. Shige Sudzuky. See article in this issue.



Photo: J. Shige Sudzuky.  
Seiro Shiga, a famous character actor of Japan.



Demmey Suzuki, the "Ramon Novarro" of Japan in *Clay*, by J. Shige Sudzuky.



A Scene from *Clay*.



From Pudovkin's film *Storm over Asia*. Bair, the descendant of Ghengis Khan (left) played by Inkischinoff. At right the giant Buddha in the Mongolian lamasery.





From *The Man with the Movie-Camera*, a film of actual events by Vertoff (director of *The Eleventh Year*), photographed by M. Kaufmann.



From *The Tempest*, a new Wufku film, the story of which is centred in a lighthouse.



Two wonderful designs by Heinrich Kleys for Rex Ingram's picture *Three Passions*, in which a shipyard set is needed. They are made from engineer's scale models to work in and match with scenes actually shot in the yards at Newcastle. Allied Artists.



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No wonder that those who walk on the same road—the path of the film world—are willing, whether they be Orientals or Westerners, to talk with each other without reserve. This chance interview has induced me to write an article, though with the fear that my pen should deface the valuable columns of this magazine.

Let our subject be *An Aspect of Cinema Construction*, to begin with, and let me narrate that the cinema should consist of its musical elements and structure. I do not know whether this title be suitable for the narration I am about to make, or if there be any more proper and special terminology. At any rate, I am not inclined to discuss any difficult problem, nor am I a great critic who can show off his gigantic technical terms. Of course, also, I am neither thinker nor metaphysician; but a matter-of-fact man who has worked for not a few years as director of film production. From this point of view, let me recount a little of my experience with the aforesaid subject.

It is probable that this kind of thing—the musical elements and structure of the film—need not be mentioned anew in the present magazine: it is, at least, one thing which a film supervisor must involuntarily experience and notice. It is certain, therefore, that he has one aspect or other of the film structure, however different his view or explanation of it may be.

When a film is produced, the director first considers the construction of it. As ten directors produce ten different kinds of films, so each of them has a different aspect or consideration of his film construction. If his film succeeds, all



ends well. But if it fails, to what cause does the director attribute the failure? Perhaps he may attribute it to the minor items—such as the story, actors and actresses, cameras, etc.—which are so vociferously discussed and argued by most critics. To speak the truth, it is the director who is all responsible for the failure or ill-success of a film. I am one of those who have groaned under the weight of similar responsibility, and I am aware that the failure is not owing to such minor causes, but lies in the film construction itself, which must be the more fundamental problem. And this film construction depends upon what I call “musical elements and structure of the film.”

It is after my commencing the musical analysis of the cinema that I have been gradually enabled to explain the causes of cinema failures and criticize properly some other films but mine. Now when I direct a film production, I deem it necessary to consider the film construction first, and then examine whether it is musical or not, and lastly revise the story, if necessary. The reader must know that there is no professional “continuity writer” in Japan. How is it, then, that I manage to adjust the film construction to music by comparing both film and music? Some may refute me by saying that a film is a film, and music is music. But I believe that the film has much of musical structure, and too much quality, form, and combination to be compared with anything else. Both music and film must be the main sources of those pleasures which are conveyed to hearing and sight respectively. Let me say a few words as regards the analytical explanation of film and music, and compare them in brief.

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The cinema is one of those amusements which can be appreciated during a limited period of time. No spectators can see a film which expands for ever; but a film, if interwoven with story scenes, consists of six reels or more. Supposing each reel ends in fifteen minutes, the spectator must have time, at least more than an hour, to see the whole film.

How about music? It is, of course, an amusement that is restricted by time. And as the form of music is a solo, or a duet, or a trio, or a quartette, or jazz, or a symphony, so the film has similar forms. In the cinema there are not so many technical terms as in music, so we cannot express particulars by means of such characters. I consider a film actor to be a kind of musical instrument, and his character to be the sound of this music. According to my opinion, therefore, a beautiful star or a chief handsome *rôle* does not always rank as the first or second violin. Sometimes she or he may act as a plain bass: in some scenes, in fact, their performances may be displayed as shadows just as the first violin does not always play a melody in music. Where can we then see the source of the above comparison? It is determined by considering the art of the performances acted by the players in a small section of a scene.

With such a system of musical instruments the music is played; with such a system of players the film is produced. But, with what *thema* is the music played by means of these instruments? What *tempo*, harmony, accent has it? And what is meant by the above things in case of the film? And what is expressed there? This I must explain a little. Some



special kinds of subjects excepted, it is natural that a story necessitates a *thema*. The obscurity or discord of the *thema* makes the story unintelligible and the film uninteresting.

Of late the word *tempo* is often used when we speak of a film. Some think that *tempo* means *cutting* or *action speed*. They are wrong. I for one believe that it signifies the *speed of a story*, or *that elliptical method which must be shown in the cinema*. It would be a great mistake to call cutting or action *tempo*, whatever giddy speed it may have. For however we may quicken time in music, the *tempo* will remain unchanged.

Harmony plays the most important part in music and influences the audience most. The greater the number of musical instruments, and the more numerous the players, the more difficult the harmony becomes. The harmony in the cinema is a couple of lines which form a cross. The vertical line denotes the harmony of players' performances, whilst the other line means the scenic harmony based on the camera work. In music, too, there is a consonant harmony and a rhythmical harmony. And the harmony of actors' performances affects both *tempo* and *thema*. As a composer is nervously careful of a sound, so a film director should pay great attention to even the smallest portion of his film. The harmony of camera work is chiefly maintained by its composition. The pictures made by an unskilled cameraman or one who has little or no knowledge of painting are not worth seeing or *listening to*.

There are two kinds of accent. Likewise, we have two in music : the accent in a stave and the accent in a song. If a stave is supposed to be a scene in the film, I make the accent



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by the camera work which goes in parallel with the actors' performances. Especially, the technique—the angle and photography—has power to show the accent. We must be careful whether the accent break the harmony and *tempo*. Many directors find that their films have often had the *themata* disjoined, and the harmony, and the *tempo* destroyed, broken, by the force of this accent. The accent of a film should be considered the climax of the story contained in the film. A continuum of accents is no more an accent; nor is a continuity of climaxes a climax.

I have analysed and compared the constructional ingredients of both film and music in a very rough manner. Now let me describe the state of construction.

Not being a metaphysician, I do not pretend to make any scholastic explanation. It may be said, however, that one thing man desires is a proper stimulus to the mental functions. This stimulus, whether strong or weak, must be controlled by temporal changes, which must be irregular, but not periodical. Moreover, when a man receives such a mental stimulus, he usually has a presentiment for the ensuing stimulus. This presentiment is, of course, one acquired by common sense, and differs in breadth and depth according to the environments and degrees of education of individuals. You must know that a youth who is fond of music—I don't mean a lad of musical genius—can keep in tune, by whistling, with a musical performance which he hears for the first time. Or you will see the tip of a pretty finger tap the corner of the table to the tune of the music which the owner of this finger hears at a ball for the first time. These involuntary actions are caused by a presentiment.

The real jazz music must be a continued burst of presentiment, and not performed by a musical note. And a performer who *reads* music can never make a great musician. One who corresponds to presentiment can appeal. It is temporal changes that can appeal to the senses of sight and hearing.

A political speaker who speaks commonplace things at great length, will now thump the table, and now cry with gestures—the audience will thus be brought to excitation. When the speaker has descended from the platform, they may say, “That speech has been *skilfully* spoken,” in spite of the fact that they have not understood it. The truth is that the temporal changes which the speaker gave them have succeeded. It is natural that the film—the film limited by time—must have some temporal changes. Changes of the story, of scenes, of actors’ performances : the scale of these changes combined coincides in every point with the scale shown by music. This discovery has encouraged me very much. At first I analysed some of the films already produced, and studied how to show the state of construction by means of scales. But now I make scales first when I produce films, and by this means I reversely construct films. Thus I am trying to construct stories reversely. The rules, tempo, consonant, accent, which are described in a musical composition, are an embodiment of those mental actions which the great musicians of the past have felt involuntarily. Though it is now impossible to regard this law as the law of the film, which has just risen and which has too short a history to tell, yet I hope that time may come when this is realised.

I regret that I cannot in detail quote here the instances of my musical construction of films. But as a musical scale



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consists of the line connecting the treble and bass, of the wave arising from the tempo of this line, and of the thickness of the line which undergoes change from the accent; so my musical construction of the film is to make a scale by analysing the line connecting the climaxes of the film, the wave of the tempo, and the thickness of the accent.

It is easy to produce a film which is universally liked or like an acknowledged piece of music. We find that the audience are satisfied with the occasional changes which pass before them during the entire performance.

With the play-book before me, and looking at a chronometer, I make a continuity of the film, and mark musical technics on it, in the same manner a music conductor does. For a cinema director is a conductor.

The reader may suppose that my method of direction turns out a trite and commonplace one, but a music conductor must command the symphony and jazz at the same time. Besides, the reader is requested to be aware that two conductors who command the same musical note seldom possess one and the same art.

J. SHIGE SUDZUKY.



## AN APPRECIATION

I was sitting in a warm corner of an exclusive Berlin restaurant just before Christmas. Our guest was late. One hardly expected him at all and had begun, as was agreed, before his arrival. I had not visited the sets of *Pandora*, but had been alive to each development and as keenly concerned as the most screen-struck school-girl over the various doings and *mots* and quaint sallies of the star, Miss Louise Brooks, who had been chosen finally after almost half a year's delay, for the somewhat problematical Lulu. "What did Louise Brooks say to-day?" . . . "O, she didn't say much. She was too busy complaining that the hen was a grandfather." . . . "What hen?" . . . "Why, the lunch hen. She said it was a grandfather." . . . "Did they get her another hen?" . . . "Certainly not. They didn't understand what she was saying. And besides, she had eaten it." It was partly (not altogether) for this reason that our editor had an advantage over the rest of the company and learned much intimate matter about daily happenings that otherwise might have been reserved for more "professional" converse. Perhaps, too, for this reason, I felt that I had a personal right to *Pandora*, that it personally was partly of my making, that I,

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too, had been introduced to the Sanctum and was on very familiar terms with the Olympians.

Also the Christmas pudding. . . "What happened to the pudding?" . . . "Well, the dresser insisted that it was in a flat dish. I said a basin, and they brought a jelly mould. Louise Brooks said the Christmas pudding she had had in London was not flat, but round—basin shape. That she had liked it very much, and lived on it for a week when she was dancing at the Café de Paris. She told the dresser (who had dressed people in England) that she knew or ought to know the shape of a Christmas pudding." . . . "What happened?" . . . "I drew one on the architect's table. Pabst said 'That is what I want. Round. Is it not, Herr Macpherson, round?' "

All very solemn. Herr Pabst (one feels one should write it Maestro, or Cher-Maître) solemn, concerned, utterly "wedded" to the least detail of his arrangements as to the last soul-shattering *dénouement*. The grain of mustard seed does not escape the eye of this almost mystically vigilant Austrian, neither does the spray of holly (and holly, Herr Macpherson?)—the immemorial symbol of some lost Druidic or Norse custom, still practised by the English-speaking races. The spray of holly became a symbol, invested with its mystery. "WE" may be said to have assisted in the making of *Pandora*.

Mr. Pabst arrived, very modest, utterly unassuming, almost "not there". But there he was, and we paid hardly any attention to his arrival, murmured something about "you told us not to wait", went on eating, tried to get the waiter. The

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waiter arrived, people kept passing, coming, going . . . Heinrich Mann, Olga Tschechowa sweeping through in search of a table, Lee Parry . . . the nordic air from the opening door shot cold winter into our snug interior, that Berlin, magnetic-north winter that exhilarates, heals, inspires.

Mr. Pabst said nothing. It was better to go on eating. He wanted nothing, yes; some soup, waving the waiter aside, must get rid of him somehow. Mr. Pabst looked depressed. The rather wood-carved look of him, sitting with head hunched down, and shoulders hunched up, was somehow suggestive of depression. The soup arrived, he evidently did not want to talk. The soup was removed, he might have something, not much of anything. It arrived, some sort of "hen", trusting it wasn't a grandfather. The hen was removed, black coffee . . . Mr. Pabst uttered. "O, I am so unhappy."

Unhappy? But why unhappy? Well, he was just unhappy. Did we mind if he didn't talk. Of course, there was no use, anyhow. No use of anything in Germany. What had Germany done, what had anyone done? What could anyone do? Everyone was against everything . . . there was no use going on. He didn't want to smoke. Never smoked. He pushed back his coffee cup. Had Miss Brooks broken an ankle? Had the set in the London fog exploded by some process of self-combustion? Had spontaneous combustion of another sort blown up the whole of Staaken? What, anyhow, had happened? The Master uttered again: "Now the French are doing things" . . . "Things? What things?"



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The French, it appeared, had done a film called *Jeanne D'Arc*. Herr Pabst, it appeared, had just come from the early evening performance of *Jeanne D'Arc*, or *Johanna von Orleans*, at the Gloria Palast just round the corner. Well, was that it? *That*—it appeared to me—was “nothing to write home about”. Mr. Pabst thought otherwise. We were doomed, it seemed, to hear nothing now of *Pandora*. The French had done a film, and that film was *Jeanne D'Arc* and no . . . he lifted a priestly and solemn hand, he would hear nothing, no, nothing whatever, against that film. That film was perfect, such technique, such originality, such grandeur, such “prickle” (does that mean sparkle or merely stickle?), such strength, such beauty, yes, beauty. . . “They have been able to make the experiment. TWO years. . . France is doing that now. And we are making (he quoted two current popular successes). Something no one had done in Germany, could never do, how could we expect to do it in a world of quickies? It was not so much the film that had depressed him as the fact that France was able to make the experiment, and Germany was going where it was. How could anyone “here in Germany” expect to do anything ever?

Now, I have written about *Jeanne D'Arc* a little spitefully and a little unharmoniously. *Jeanne D'Arc* (see, if you must, some *Close Up* or other, some twelve months back) set me out of key. It positively bullied me as no film has yet done. I was forced to pity, pity, pity. My affections and credulity were hammered. I was kicked. I was throttled. I was laid upon a torture rack. Quite solemnly I was burned at the stake and lifting eyes to heaven I had forgiven my malefactors.

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Yes, the magnificent technique of Dreyer did that for me. But was I moved? Was I inspired or touched? *Jeanne D'Arc*, as represented by Dreyer, illustrated for me that famous Corinthians Thirteenth:—*And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor and though I give my body to be burned (etc., etc., etc.), and have not love I am nothing.*

I gave every sentiment of which I am capable to that marvellous demonstration of Falconetti. But one. I reserved far off, and unassailable, a sentiment that is never called forth and never inspired and never made to blossom by technical ability, by sheer perfection of medium, by originality and by intellectualism, no matter how dynamic . . . that sentiment is love simply. I did not *love* the Joan of Dreyer and the "French", as Mr. Pabst must call them. I love and always will love the most modest feminine creation of this Viennese cher-maître.

But how tell him all that? Here he is sitting over coffee, and yes, he has condescended to have just that half glass of white Rhine, it looks so gold, so he turns the stem of the wine glass meditatively. He is convinced for the moment in himself that he is nothing, he can say nothing for himself, and certainly he will say nothing for *Pandora*. Louisa (as he calls her) Brooks, yes, she has a hidden side, a strange quality. For himself there is nothing to be said. If the film is any good at all it is obvious it is going to be because Louisa Brooks has a strange quality. . . . "There is another side to her."

I must say that playing into his own hands, Mr. Pabst has all unwittingly given the clue to that for which one searches. No amount of compelling clap-trap "interview" journalese would draw just that fine phrase from him. We admit, and



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gladly, that the delightful elf-like spirit that remonstrated to a blandly puzzled Staaken waiter's "was ist los?" with the all-American "Los? It's not los, it's awful. It's a grandfather!" must have "another side to her". But who (I may at this moment be permitted forensically to ask) would ever discover, could ever have discovered that "other side" but the perfectly preposterously modest director who sits facing us? "Louisa" Brooks has another side to her. So, obviously, has Greta Garbo, Nielsen, the beautiful, more than beautiful Brigitte Helm, the calm-eyed Herthe van Walter, and the demure, delicious little Edith Jehanne.

All the women of Herr Pabst's creation, be it a simple super in a crowd scene or a waitress in a restaurant, have "another side" to them.

At this point I bravely permitted myself to make a remark. "Pandora will be beautiful. Mr. Macpherson says the highest, the highest things about it . . . its atmosphere, its subtlety. He says the scene, for instance, of the Salvation Army in the foggy slum street is (I paused for the Gargantuan parallel) is 'sheer Pabst'." I had found the right phrase, albeit the consultant on the court of last appeal for Christmas puddings had given it to me. "This new film of G. W. Pabst is going to be (this is its highest glory) sheer Pabst."

I write going to be, but last night the much-delayed *Pandora* was having its jubilant premiere at the Gloria Palast in Berlin. It is a grief to us that we could not be there, but in ourselves we are assured that no premiere of *Pandora* could ever affect us more than our first film, our introduction, we might say, to the whole of the possibility of screen art—*Joyless Street*, seen here in Montreux some five years ago. *Joyless*



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*Street* was my never-to-be-forgotten premiere to the whole art of the screen, and G. W. Pabst was and is my first recognised master of the art.

The place of the Russians is assured, this is no moment with which to deal with them. But G. W. Pabst, being a European, is, in a way, a more subtle figure or symbol. He is, as it were, the link between the old tradition, pure art ideas of the French, of the Viennese, of (in a word) Europe and the new American and Near East. He is, in that, in a more precarious psychological position. He holds, as it were, the clue, must hold his position almost as the keystone to the vast æsthetic structure we call now unquestionably the Art of the Film. The Germans hold the key really, are the intermediaries between Russian and the outside world that still believes Red to be a symbol of murder and destruction.

The new Russians, to digress, in their ideas of humanity, of equality, of the sheltering and housing of the poor and outcast, are, it is apparent, the only government not only in Europe, but in the world, who seem literally to have considered the teaching of that much misunderstood Jew of Nazareth at its face value. "Feed the poor," "Sell all that you have and give it to the poor," "The last shall be first," etc., etc. There has been, to my knowledge, no effort on the part of any government nor on the part of any organised body, "house" or "senate", to make the film a medium for promulgation of ideas other than intellectually sterile and of moron entertainment.

This is really as a purely æsthetic critical aside, has nothing to do with politics and "politicians", of which I know nothing and of whom I know not one. It stands regrettably

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to reason, however, if in some weird Utopia one should be called upon to judge a country by its æsthetic film output, one would have to acclaim the Soviet first, the German Republic second. The film, one might have said, has nothing to do with countries, education or civic reform, and certainly has nothing to do with æsthetics. But the day of that sort of talk is over. The film is recognised, and the people and the peoples of the world are being judged, openly condemned, condoned or contaminated by their film output. We know that. We don't have to go further into it. It also seems unnecessary to add anything to the already vast bulk of technical and æsthetic appreciation of the work of G. W. Pabst. However, I cannot help adding to it . . . as one cannot help looking at and appraising flowers in a garden.

For what are the creations of G. W. Pabst but growing, vivid and living beauty? They move and glow before him like sun-flowers to the sun. I have taken an almost diabolic delight in following the career of each of his stars. For no star, once G. W. Pabst has adequately placed her, seems to me to belong to any other. I know nothing of Greta Garbo personally, and it would be out of place to suggest that the curious disintegration of her screen personality has anything to do with her personally.

Let us put Miss Garbo out of it entirely and say that Greta Garbo, under Pabst, was (I quote an earlier article) a Nordic ice-flower. Under preceding and succeeding directors she was either an over-grown hoyden or a buffet Guinness-please-miss. The performance of Greta Garbo in that subtle masterpiece, *Anna Karenina* (*Love*), was inexplicably vulgar and incredibly dull. It was only by the greatest effort of



will that one could visualise in that lifeless and dough-like visage a trace of the glamour, the chiselled purity, the dazzling, almost unearthly beauty that one recognised so acutely in the very-young figure of the half-starved aristocratic official's daughter in *Joyless Street*. Greta Garbo, in a little house dress, an apron and low slippers, sweeping the passage of the improvident home in *Joyless Street*, remained an aristocrat. Greta Garbo, as the wife of a Russian Court official and the mistress of a man of the world, diademed and in sweeping robes in the Palace of Karenin, was a house-maid at a carnival.

Perhaps the example of Greta Garbo is an exaggerated instance, and, I repeat, the young actress herself may have had little say in the hands of those who make her the devil in films where Gilbert is the flesh.

Take Brigitte Helm, who is always an artist. I have not seen all her films, but without question her performance of the blind girl in *Jeanne Ney* is one of her most striking—a feat that really lifted her above the realm of legitimate artists. She is almost an “illegitimate” magician. “Brigitte Helm did not look blind,” I heard repeated of her in Berlin, “she *was* blind.”

Isn't that it? G. W. Pabst is almost a magician, his people are “created, not made”? There is, indeed, “another side” to every one of his women, whether it be the impoverished little daughter of post-war Vienna or one of the extras in an orgy scene, each and every one is shown as a “being”, a creature of consummate life and power and vitality. G. W. Pabst brings out the vital and vivid forces



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in women as the sun in flowers. Brigitte Helm lifts a head like a proud Madonna lily. Her eyes in *Jeanne Ney* are the wide staring eyes of the blind, but in her blindness she is alive, aware, acute, clairvoyantly attuned to every sound, every movement, every shade of light and every shift of sun and shadow. Brigitte Helm did not look blind, she *was* blind. I was enthralled, to find in talking to Mr. Pabst on my first meeting with him last summer, that I had myself gleaned the essence of her acting. I said "I don't feel that Brigitte Helm is acting. I feel that she is in a trance. That she has the power to throw herself into a trance and to move and speak and live a life quite outside her own personal experience." I thought my remark might meet with his disapproval or in some way seem over-drawn to him. But not at all. He was delighted. "Ah," he said, "you see. You have it. Do you know in that scene when she walks with Jeanne Ney in the streets of Paris, she was almost killed." . . . "Almost killed?" . . . "The actor driving the taxi was not a driver really, and had had to learn. He was not very sure of his steering. Brigitte Helm walked right in front of him. I had to run before the camera to save her. Do you know why? She was blind. She simply did not see it." The force of vision of this acute director and the strength of spirit of Brigitte Helm had actually so transformed her. This miracle of acting had been achieved. She did not look blind, she *was* blind.

So, in a lesser degree, but in no less vivid manner, each and every creation of G. W. Pabst does not "look" good or bad, happy or unhappy, wise or foolish, she "is" for the time being what she typifies. G. W. Pabst, their creator,

cannot realise how a thing "created, not made", must forever take precedence to the most technically perfected image. I know that the image of the Maid of Orleans in the Dreyer conception is technically flawless. But to me (and not a few others) the *Jeanne D'Arc* is (I repeat it) *made*, the Image is carved and constructed.

Imagine Brigitte Helm in this role and directed by Pabst . . . we scarcely dare imagine such a thing. It were out of place to speak seriously of mediums and mediumistic trances . . . but there are times when art so far transcends itself that we are forced into another set of symbols. The *Jeanne D'Arc* of Dreyer is art carried to its highest—wood-carving, if you will, bronze or even mediæval silver, but it remains art as carvings on a cathedral. The life-like Image of a saint set at dusk in a cathedral causes us to cry "magnificent", the opening of the violets in our garden touches us but causes no astonishment. We take it so for granted.

I have not taken part in the conversation that has been going on. I have not even been listening. (You will remember we are seated in a warm corner of a Berlin restaurant just before Christmas.) There is some little stir and probably we must be going. I must say just one thing. "Mr. Pabst, I must ask you one thing—" He turned courteously from weightier matter—"about, if you don't mind, *Joyless Street*."

I had seen a still of a dead body, a very beautiful still of the figure of the mundane lady who, you will recall, is killed in the "house" she went to with her lover. "I wanted to know about that body of Madame —. . . I was wondering about it." Mr. Pabst did not wait for me to explain fully, he



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burst into a torrent of wailing and apology. "O, a dead body . . . a dead body . . . there is no such thing as a dead body on the screen. . ." One remembered an anecdote he had told, quietly and with no acumen, no hint of bitterness, of some half-dozen or more of his companions in their internment camp who, technically imprisoned and detained, had, after four hideous mutilated years of waiting, deliberately killed themselves *after the armistice*. "The Valley of the Shadow of Death" has touched each one of us, perhaps none so poignantly as this vivid, sensitive Austrian artist, who, ignorant that war had even been declared, was seized with his companions on a returning New York passenger ship and, vibrating with his love of life and love of love and beauty, was buried dead-alive in that particular crowded barracks. Mr. Pabst touched lightly enough on incidents of his companions who died there naturally (if such a word can ironically be used in this connection) during the period of war activity. He became hilarious and gay at the mention of the young French officers who (in the now credited stage and screen manner) made friends for the sake of whiling away tedium of forced inactivity and isolation. He makes more than a movie set of the young Americans who assisted the prisoners with the perilous underground tunnel from their dug-out, so that certain of their number could periodically "escape" for an hour or two, to get warm and have a chat and, one hopes, some little snack of those then so justly famous tinned pork and beans in the friendly enemy quarters. All a game . . . a somewhat grim and ironical performance (so he seems to intimate), but none to blame, not certainly that debonnaire French officer and that cluster of superficially



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humane Americans . . . only his eyes went very strange and his face set when he spoke of his companions who saw fit to do away with themselves *after the armistice*.

We must leave that, we must leave dead bodies of heroes achieving no name on tablets set at the base of statues nor on gold-wreathed slabs set ornate and respectable above bank-presidents' mahogany roll-top desks. Our concern is not with politics or politicians, nor the housing of the poor nor the educating of the ignorant. Our concern is with screen art simply . . . and with a particular still that did not match up with the cinema scene itself.

"I saw *Joyless Street* a second time. It was only last year. Then I did make a point of looking for the dead body and *did* see it. The first time I was so enchanted with light filtering through those shutters in that half-darkened room, I was so interested in the mass effect you got with the men's thick shoulders and blocked in shapes . . . is it possible that in the earlier version the shots showing the dead woman on the floor were for some reason deleted?"

"Ah," interrupted Mr. Pabst delightedly, "I did not *mean* you to see the body of the murdered woman on the floor."

H. D.

## CLOSE UP

# NATURE AND LOVE

The eternal struggle for survival: for food, for procreation . . . "with words to that effect" the picture opens. It sounds rather like the history of this poor picture itself, which has been reduced to a skeleton of a mere six thousand feet in a desperate effort to please the censor. But our censor has studied his book on anatomical structure and sees sex-appeal even in the skeleton; there is no tricking that worthy gentleman out of his prey. Here is a clean picture that, in any sane state, would be shown in schools as straightforward sex education, and the censor giggles and chuckles in the darkness of the projection room and says that it is not "nice" for the great general public of grown-up men and women.

Where is that petition form?

Beginning sequence is elementary: two stars clash together and a world is formed. Barren world, but vapors cool to water, and in the water—life! Cells with movement in them; striking contrast being drawn between the circulation of traffic in a great city. Amoebae, glittering gold of reflected light. Pleasant to think that glittering gold is the seed of life. Groups of cells are formed, multiply, split up,

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reform. Perfect microscopic photography reveals more developed animalcule, showing how two bodies join together for the greater strength of the organism.

It was a mistake to color the first trace of backbone in the protoplasmic creatures, an intrusion of the film editor on the consciousness of the spectator who, by this time, is lost in the contemplation of himself aeons of years ago : nevertheless it is a certain continuity device to jump successive stages to the fish.

Sea becomes too crowded : land is sought by cold-blooded things like snakes, who have formed their backbones by burrowing in sand. There are excellent shots of young snakes bursting from their shells : but the supremacy of cold blood is challenged by the mammals who care for their young. A chance for popular appeal, for several hundred feet all manner of beasts with their young are capitalized. Quite simply we may say that we doted on the new-born foal ; while those who declare that pigs are hateful, and consider them ridiculous antediluvian survivals, must surely confess that piglets have ingratiating ways.

Hurrah ! Evolution has justified its travail. Grave-faced and grotesque monkeys hop across the screen ; orang-outangs, with large solemn eyes, pick leaves to protect themselves from the scorching sun. The delight we got from the antics of these marvellous creatures cannot be squeezed into print ; one scene showing two baby chimpanzees joining hands with mother, and one insignificant human, slowly learning to walk upright, were such a joy that we vainly groped for half-crowns which might be pressed into a projectionist's palm as bribe for re-running the reel.



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What ghastly bathos—man! These sequences must have been placed in the wrong order. The filmish business of a cave-dweller fighting a bear, wife and child watching in agonized close-ups (*Michael Strogoff*?), makes one sceptical about the whole human race. That meditative monkey!

Producers of this film are men of science, they should never have attempted reconstructions of early days. It comes as a shock to us, no doubt as an immense relief to the *Sunday Express*, to find that the cave-dwellers wore coy skirts. Scenes of later domestic life, in houses built on poles above the water, are equally untrue.

Evolution brings the wing of a bird, the finely sensitive hand of a 'cellist.

The next part of the film shows evolution of the earth's creatures paralleled in the human embryo: from the moment when the sperm fertilizes the ovum to the severing of the cord of life by the obstetrician.

"Meet?" said our companion, "yourself."

"Possibly?" we whispered, "he is a film director, or a journalist, or a cameraman, or . . ."

It is on account of this section of the film, told as it is in dignified yet fascinating manner, that we heartily recommend the picture to schools. Here, however, the censor must have shut his eyes and looked shocked, for the rest of the film curiously resembles *Evolution*, an educational picture released some years ago.

After this section the producers sensationally introduce freaks: a man with webbed feet, a woman with scaled skin, an atavistic throw-back with hairy face. Why look so upset, dear reader, you pay to see them all in the circus? Although

## CLOSE UP

there is a horrible moment when one of the unfortunates is shown walking in a garden, his face completely covered by a black veil hanging from the rim of his hat; a sickening sensation when his hand goes up to remove his hat . . .

Incidents not dwelt on unduly. The sex motive is rapidly surveyed throughout the whole scale of nature; from the humble snail to the superb reindeer. Salmon leap waterfalls to reach their breeding ground (in the words of the popular song: "Could Lloyd George do it?"), bull-frogs take to song, and gorgeous peacocks spread their tails. Personally, I find the evolution of a purely useless and decorative thing as a peacock's tail as difficult as the giraffe's neck is easy.

Shots are inserted to show how some species have gone back. In the dark caves of Dalmatia there are colorless lizards which have lost their eyes.

Symbolism ends the film: modern civilization and people from every corner of the world, some of the negro heads being especially fine.

Our schools need this film so much that we feel the necessity to repeat. To realize the tortures the adolescent mind can suffer one has only to read *The Rampant Age*, or *Les Faux-Monnayeurs*. A picture like this would give balanced vision; it would indicate that sex is not just a dark corner occupation invented by nasty-minded individuals, but a tremendous impulse throughout all nature.

O. B.



## CLOSE UP

### WHAT OF THE FUTURE

*"They cannot last. I give them a few years."*

Time, 1909. Subject, the movies. The oracle, D. W. Griffith.

An engaging example of the treachery of prophecy. And when a major prophet of the cinema can thus be rebuked by events, what, it may be asked, does it avail a minor member of the craft to thrust himself forward and ask attention while he delivers himself of a vision?

It would avail little, save for the fact that he is not a pessimist. This alone, aside from what he may utter, should prove an acceptable *divertissement*. An optimistic or encouraging outlook among those engaged in the solemn business of discussing the movies is as rare as it is hazardous.

Jeremiahs are plentiful. A prophet of gloom is assured always of respect and applause. He who foresees brightness, success, advancement, goodness, betterment, is seldom interesting. Bilioussness is a far more dramatic source of inspiration than eupepsia. If you would have an attentive and sympathetic audience you must speak sombrely and with grave shakings of the head. Previews of failure and disaster are much more to the general taste. That such picturings rarely prove real is no matter. Better luck next time.



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At the risk, therefore, of being snubbed, the present seer ventures to predict a rosy future for the cinema. He beholds a new era, with golden opportunities for money making, plus similar opportunities for the expression of genius and the development of dramatic art.

Before the advent of the talking picture, about a year ago, one might sincerely have said that the cinema had no future. That is to say, it had seemingly reached the limit of its possibilities. It was capable of no further advancement. Variations—yes; but merely peculiarities of treatment; elaborations; eccentricities; jazz prostitutions—all of the various oddities which mark other forms of expression that have reached the end of their normal growth.

But here come the talkies. Unforseen, unprophesied, unprepared for. A new and unexpected avenue of development. A new lease of vitality for the movies, and offering to all prophets a hint of the futility of predicating the future on the present.

We are not here concerned with what we may think of the talkies as an institution in themselves. Whether we like them or not is of no more moment than whether we like motor cars or short skirts. They are here, and here to stay until something else shall take their place. If we resent them—so much the worse for us, because there is nothing we can do about it.

True to the teachings of human experience, this innovation is concurrently bringing with it other innovations. It is stimulating invention. Quickening ideas, and welcoming them. Encouraging adventure into collateral fields. The entire movie world is on the *qui vive* for novelty and change. The transitional state in which it finds itself is making it

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alertly susceptible to suggestion ; eagerly ready to adopt new methods, new features ; to experiment with any promising divergency. To those with ought to offer of originality in the realm of the cinema this is the acceptable time. A like opportunity may not again present itself in a score of years.

What is to be the outcome? What of the future? Let us consult the oracle Griffith. He is feeling better now than he did twenty years ago. Moreover, his pessimism at that time could not have reflected his inner convictions. Otherwise, he would scarcely have continued to stake his fortune on the then struggling and despised movies. Here is what he now says ; and he is pre-eminently entitled to a hearing as the Moses of filmdom :

So far all our silent pictures have been written on sand. The medium is far from being equal to the medium of words, written or spoken. I welcome talking pictures because, with the aid of music and words, we shall see pictures in the near future that can be classed with the great plays, poems, paintings, music and other art forms. Most of our present pictures are good for only a few years, and then, through their faulty medium, they become obsolete ; while the plays of Shakespeare are as beautiful now as the day they were written.

When the motion picture creates something to compare with the plays of Euripides, that have lived two thousand years, or the works of Homer, or Keats's " Ode to a Grecian Urn ", or the music of Handel, Bach and Wagner, then it will become established as an art form. Dialogue in pictures, I am sure, will accomplish this end.



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With the possible exception of Joseph Schenck, Griffith's outlook is now shared by all of the Hollywood producers. The initial period of doubt has been remarkably short-lived. This change of attitude has been wrought, not alone by the rapid development and improvements of the phonofilm, but also and more particularly by the ever brightening promise of its possibilities.

But our look into the future is not bounded by the promise of the talking picture alone. The incidental newnesses and developments that are accompanying the present transition have also their vistas of promise.

Dialogue and music will be but a part of the cinema of to-morrow. Their effectiveness will be enhanced by color and by a three-dimensioned screen. The actors will have the semblance of living beings. The present flat presentments in colorless shades will be replaced by reflected actualities.

The screen will be transformed into a window, through which we shall look in stereoscopic perspective upon a living, audible world. The roar of cataract, the babble of brook, the twitter of birds, the thunder and thrash of storm—all will contribute their part to the illusion of aliveness and to the heightening of dramatic and artistic effect.

Pictures in natural color and with accompanying sound will be printed on paper rolls, instead of the present-day expensive and inflammable film. Screening will be by means of reflection in place of direct projection. Homes will be equipped with reflectoscopes, as they are now equipped with phonographs and radios, and moving-picture rolls will be as cheaply bought or rented as are books or gramophone records.



## CLOSE UP

Men of the greatest genius will become producers and directors. Max Reinhardt's recent advent into the field of talking pictures is an index of this. The pictures of tomorrow, with their extended scope for expression, will become individualistic. "Style" will constitute as salient an element of cinema creation as it does now of art and literature. With but two or three exceptions, creators of pictures to-day reveal no individuality. The limitations of the silent drama, combined with the type of men who compose the majority of our directors, offer scant opportunity for distinctiveness or originality.

Shallow talents and small minds will find themselves unequal to the requirements and the opportunities of the coming cinema era. The day of mediocrity and bluff in the leadership of photodramaturgy is already doomed. After the blush of its novelty is gone, the phonofilm will be obliged to develop its fullest possibilities, in order to hold the public. And this can and will be accomplished only by men and women of genuine ability, education, and genius.

The silent drama will continue to exist. It offers a medium for expression within the limits of those incapable of more exacting technique or more costly production. Moreover, there will always be those to whom the flat, silent, colorless picture will appeal as an art form or as a source of entertainment.

But the world at large will follow the new cinema development. It will offer immeasurably greater variety and a fuller satisfaction. Our modern world is a world of realism; and no art form yet invented has so closely approximated the realistic as will that of the cinema of the near future.

All in all, the outlook is alluringly bright. At any rate, such is the vision of the present seer. He lays no claim to inspiration. Nor to any revelation other than an intimate knowledge of the evolution of the movies and an illuminating experience running back to the days when those who are now loudest in their clamor for a continuance of the *status quo* would not deign to look at a movie nor so much as recognize the silent drama as worthy of attention.

CLIFFORD HOWARD.

## THE NOVELIST WHO WAS A SCENARIST

Your first hope on opening *The King Who Was A King*, "The Book of a Film", by H. G. Wells (Benn, 7s. 6d. net), is that all these italics are not sub-titles. By this time you have found the Introductory Chapter, which calls itself *The Film, the Art Form of the Future*, and have warmed up quite nicely reading that "We knew how to convey much that we had to say by a woven fabric of printed words or by scene and actor, fine 'lines' and preface assisting, and it was with extraordinary reluctance, if at all, that we could be won to admit that on the screen a greater depth of intimation, a more subtle and delicate fabric of suggestion, a completer beauty



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and power, might be possible than any our tried and trusted equipment could achieve."

*The King Who Was A King*, we learn, is the expansion of an earlier scenario written for one Mr. Godal who sold a title, or at any rate advertised a title as a film ready for booking, and then came to Mr. Wells to write it for him. The scenario was entitled *The Peace of the World*, and, as Mr. Wells himself remarks, here in the best conventional tradition it appears revised and expanded bearing another name. "I am told," says he, "there is ample financial backing now for any production I can invent, and when I ask if I may make my scenario as difficult and expensive as I like, I am told to go ahead. So here I go ahead."

Yes, the italics are indeed sub-titles. But whirrrrr, is not that a projector grinding? Now whose is that prelude, and why do we see it not as it should be but as it probably would be? Henrik Galeen? Why don't we see it as Wagner would take it, and why *do* we see it as Gunther Krampf would try to? Assuredly, or wouldn't it?—it would look like a tableau at a World Fair. The woman would have a raffia skirt and hibiscus in her hair. Unless, of course, Mr. Wells himself stepped in and took the reins, when we hope she wouldn't.

But, my word! the next bit is gorgeous! I do like the quill pen dipped in ink and the lines A draws on the map with it in *bright red*. Click, click, there's good cutting—good (for it's the coming word) montage in this. Not unlike *The Spy*, the terse mechanism, and crisp gesture. Not unlike what we've been praising for so long, the *Russian* touch. Perhaps you are helped to see it that way because none but



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Mr. Wells and the Russians have dealt with material that matters.

Now, Mr. Wells, this is a great thing, and it's about time to show Britain the way it ought to go. You have done that. In many ways you have saved Britain's face, for it is too grim to go on allowing the world to believe that *Confetti* and *Sailors Don't Care* are the ideals of British cinematography.

Now, about all these sub-titles. Here, if ever, is the place for sound. Sound in its logical progression from the basic principle illustrated by Eisenstein, Pudovkin and Alexandroff in a previous *Close Up*. I would not have words passing across the images, I would use voices instead and sounds instead, and not even bother to show the face of the man speaking unless it happened simply to be there. In fact, as in the Sound Imagery suggested by Robert Herring in this issue.

K. M.

## THE CINEMA IN PARIS

*L'Argent*, directed by Marcel L'Herbier, *Le Capitaine Fracasse*, directed by Albert Cavalcanti, and *Le Tournoi*, directed by Jean Renoir, have been shown recently in Paris.

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Of these three films, whose directors are all interesting from different points of view, *L'Argent*, by Marcel L'Herbier, is the most important.

But we must first make a reservation. For the film, as it is shown at present, was cut by the renters against the will of the director and without his knowledge. Therefore criticism is difficult, because the gaps which are noticeable here and there are doubtless due to the clumsy cuts that have been made.

But even as it stands, L'Herbier's film is very beautiful and full of cinematic qualities, and it would have been almost a perfect film had it not been for one thing. The scenario loses much of value through a disconcerting error; instead of treating the subject from the point of view of the struggle for money itself, L'Herbier shows us only the struggle of Saccard the banker against Gundersmann, the banker. This is the weakest point and the reason that the film is disappointing in spite of its great qualities.

It is time that the importance of the scenario were realised, for producers have not yet accepted the fact, and until they do we shall never have films that completely satisfy. With the best intention in the world we cannot interest ourselves in the possible tragic fate of a banker when we are ready to be interested in real tragedy—that is, the merciless battle concerning the golden calf between all bankers and their employees. But here all subsidiary figures are just marionettes, and it is for this reason the film fails in complete appeal.

It is a fundamental fault; otherwise the subject is treated with care and only a slight over-intellectuality of L'Herbier damps our pleasure a little. An intellectuality which is

expressed by the sets, which, though very beautiful, do not seem quite to fit into the frame of the film, and an intellectuality which is apparent sometimes in the rather forced acting of Brigitte Helm.

As the cutting is not the work of L'Herbier, it would not be just to criticise it.

The acting of Marie Glory is really good and full of reality. This young actress has much sensitiveness, an attractive face, and radiates a pleasant sincerity. Alcover, Saccard the banker, is only half successful, for his acting is full of theatrical gestures and he has yet much to learn. Alfred Abel knows his work thoroughly and the sureness of his gestures, though full of routine, are very reposing.

Some noises were added from the Bourse, and I consider these sound effects add much to the emotional quality of the work.

*Le Capitaine Fracasse* and *Le Tournoi* are both historical films, and it is incomprehensible to me why more people do not protest against spectacles which seem to me personally to have nothing to do with the cinema.

Therefore, in spite of the skill and the photographic resources at the disposition of these two directors, it is not to be wondered at that their efforts were in vain. But I must add that for me historical film has no reason for existence.

In the first place the film imposes images with such force and precision that it upsets all pre-conceived ideas on this or that epoch, and again, we ourselves may not know what has been the signification of such and such a gesture, therefore all such attempts, no matter how intelligent they are, cannot justify their means.



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There is perhaps only the Russian system of making historical films to explain the events of the revolution, and there, by re-working historical facts to the conclusions of to-day, they succeed in holding our interest.

These elements are lacking in the French films and though Pierre Blanchar is a good actor, he cannot equal a Douglas Fairbanks, and his creation is not so good as those of his former romantic roles.

The same criticism applies as well to the principal actor in *Le Tournoi*, by Jean Renoir, Aldo Naldi, the celebrated fencer, although his skill with the épée gives him the supremacy over Blanchar in *Le Capitaine Fracasse*.

It must be understood that these criticisms are not addressed to the two directors, but rather to those renters who, in spite of previous example, insist on repeating such spectacular pieces. They do not, indeed, hesitate to spend millions on them, while refusing a far more modest sum to directors who propose infinitely more cinematic scenarios.

It is possible that the films may be successful with the general public. This proves nothing, for the taste of the public is constantly spoilt by the paid press, which never protests against the horrible stupidities constantly distributed by commercial films.

It is, indeed, a tragedy that the efforts and the cinematic sense of a Cavalcanti are spoilt by their blind obstinacy, when such directors could give deep satisfaction to all those of us who have not lost faith in the cinema.

\* \* \*

The *contingentement* has shown already in its short existence the profound error of the system. For example,

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already more "*fiches de contingentement*" have been delivered than the number of films admitted to be introduced into France. Naturally, they will now modify the application of the law, but it will still remain as tiresome as before. All it will give, as it has given till now, will be a prize to mediocrity.

\* \* \*

Marcel L'Herbier is preparing the realisation of *Nuits de Princes*, from Joseph Kessel's novel, for Albatross Sequana. Probably Jacques Catelain and Gina Manes will be included among the artistes.

\* \* \*

René Clair is preparing for Sofar a detective film of the type very popular in Paris at the moment. Again they have fallen into the same fault as in other cases. Because some American detective films were made, they imagine they have found the solution to all problems in imitating these films constantly, instead of choosing a subject that would interest from the point of view of its humanity. Of course, Sternberg's *Underworld* was an excellent film, but there is no reason to repeat it constantly.

JEAN LENAUER.

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# CHINE—MACHINES—ELECTRICITE

Ciné-Club de Genève annonçait pour samedi 12 Janvier la projection de :

*La marche des machines*

et *La nuit électrique* d'Eugène Deslaw

*La Rose de Pu-Chui*

trois films aimablement prêtés par le Studio 28 à Paris, et tout à fait inconnus encore, ici. Films de luxe, les deux premiers, parce que films d'amateur, rareté le troisième puisqu'il fut réalisé par une firme de Shanghai.

Se serait-on avisé, jadis, de trouver belle cette insensible mais vivante création de l'homme, la Machine. Elle était l'antipode de la poésie, l'incarnation d'un réalisme brutal et inesthétique et le poète fuyait l'usine où il croyait ne pouvoir trouver jamais aucune inspiration. En s'approchant du mécanicien, quelques-uns ont fait une merveilleuse découverte et l'art a trouvé un aliment nouveau. La machine est dans le film une animatrice peu ordinaire. Un train en marche ne réalise-t-il pas la vision la plus forte que l'on puisse obtenir. Souvenons-nous, à cet égard, de certains passages du film " La Roue ".



Deslaw nous a donné un petit poème visuel sur la marche des machines. Les images en sont heureusement choisies, pour la plupart, et l'on ne se lasse guère d'en suivre la succession variée. Travail méticuleux de la scie, opiniâtre va et vient du cylindre, rotation de gigantesques tambours, les sujets alternent rapidement, voici encore les bras infatigables du pétrin mécanique, anxieux de reconstruire une résistance qui leur est refusée, puis la frêle silhouette d'une grue enlevant son fardeau. Il ne manque peut-être, à l'inventaire, que quelques spécimens de machines susceptibles de faire naître une sensation plus impressionnante encore de puissance, mais des films tels que celui-ci gagnent à être brefs.

Moins intéressante peut-être est la *Nuit électrique*, où la fantaisie de l'auteur met à rude épreuve nos facultés d'adaptation visuelle. Les multiples illuminations qui apparaissent sur l'écran sont d'inégale valeur, reviennent parfois plus souvent qu'à leur tour. Certaines lampes de carrousels s'obstinent à défiler devant nos yeux sans que nous leur en sachions gré, à vrai dire. Un peu trop d'insistance donc, ici et là, à mon avis, et pas assez d'imagination dans le choix des sujets. C'est du cinéma pur, il est vrai, mais incomplet, approximatif, et Deslaw n'a rendu qu'un hommage partiel à la lumière électrique en se bornant à l'enregistrement d'enseignes et de feux d'artifice. N'y aurait-il pas de belles pages à ajouter à cet album, une gare, un port, de nuit, un dépôt de tramways, peuvent fournir de bons tableaux.

Les deux films de Deslaw nous autorisent cependant, en dépit de leurs imperfections, à espérer beaucoup du talent de ce *coming man*.

## CLOSE UP

*La rose de Pu-Chui* est le premier film intégralement chinois projeté à Genève. Evoquant une légende indigène, il ne manque ni de poésie, ni de sentiment. Le thème en est fort simple : une jeune fille distinguée, naturellement, et un étudiant, se rencontrent. C'est le coup de foudre . . . le texte l'indique au reste, mais la scène suffirait à nous en informer, les deux acteurs chinois qui l'interprètent sont admirables de naturel et, ma foi, aussi attachants que Greta Garbo et John Gilbert. Un danger menace la jeune fille et ce danger est personnifié par un redoutable bandit qui décide de s'emparer d'elle. Voici le bandit en question, au milieu de sa troupe aux accoutrements bizarres. Quoique fort grimaçant, le personnage ne laisse pas de nous égayer par sa nervosité excessive. Il part à l'assaut du monastère qui abrite l'objet de ses désirs et ses guerriers s'ébranlent à sa suite, d'un pas de course original qui nous donne à penser qu'ils sont bien aises de se dégourdir les jambes mais pas impatients du tout d'arriver. Un portail vénérable défend l'accès du monastère. Mais tout serait perdu néanmoins sans une ruse de l'étudiant qui envoie un serviteur zélé quérir du secours. Seul contre tous les ennemis, ce brave homme réussit à se frayer un passage grâce aux savants moulinets qu'il exécute avec sa canne. Le secours arrive sous forme de guerriers blancs et une bataille épique se livre aussitôt. Beaucoup de gestes, peu ou pas de morts. Les bandits s'enfuient. Tout est bien qui finit bien.

Ce film présente un réel intérêt. La technique de la prise de vues est primitive, sans doute, mais le jeu des acteurs, leurs expressions, ne manquent pas de sincérité. La note comique est soutenue presque constamment par d'ingénieuses



trouvailles. Pour juger toutefois du degré de perfection atteint par les cinéastes chinois, il faut attendre d'autres productions, les voir à l'œuvre en particulier dans la réalisation d'un film moins spécial que *la Rose de Pu-Chui* qui présente une atmosphère de légende, tout comme le fragment précédemment projeté du film russe *Zvenihora*.

FREDDY CHEVALLEY.

## AFTER MY PREMIERES

There is a rule that all directors should achieve some such thing as an article before the first showing of their films. It brings to mind the custom of pronouncing one's name very loudly and intelligibly when one is introduced to people whose good opinion is desired. A little literary exercise ordinarily finishes the work of the cinematographer. For one does not expect to change the cutting after the first showing, it would be a catastrophe, a disaster.

I well remember the bewilderment of an old director when he learnt that I recut my film two weeks after the first showing at the Studio 28. That it is possible to observe the reactions of the public and to take these into account, even to conform one's work to them, this he found impossible to understand. But I observe the reactions of the public and I try to conform



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to them. The time is past when opinions depended upon the judgment of the armchair, where painters formed criticisms according to the situation of a key to the picture. Permanent contact with the public and with *objective and serious criticism* is absolutely indispensable to the young.

I consider my films as trial films. *La Marche des Machines* is only a means of optically "direct action", of action upon the spectator's eyes without any literary logic. In *La Marche des Machines* there is neither a literary beginning nor an end, scenes last only long enough in order that the spectator cannot confuse them with reality. The rhythm of images reduces to nothingness that part of them which is documentary and instructive. They are not to be understood. They are to be felt merely.

*Les Nuits Electriques* is an effort towards the replacing of pure cutting and pure rhythm with a subject of the "avant-garde". (Forgive my use of this pretentious and annoying expression.) Publicity of publicity signs, luminous projection of lights, their general and torrential invasion of a city, tempted me. And the woman, eternally turning, the sudden apparition of love. . . . It is a veritable evasion, a moment of freedom, a piercing of the sad and slow rhythm in which we are constrained to live. A protest against the literary presentation of nights, those nights, you know, when nothing moves, those nights where there was nothing but candles, petrol, an annoyingly old moon, used to death by all these symbolist versifiers.

There are neither literary people nor sub-titles in my films. The modern spectator is accustomed already to do without sub-titles, but he is still used to adapting himself according

## CLOSE UP

to the literary logic of human movement. The success of *La Marche des Machines* proves that the spectator can assimilate the sensations and desire of the creator of a film simply by the interpretation of the rhythm.

*Les Nuits Electriques* has proved to me that plastic perfection, photography of "sets", of *details*, is not in accordance with rhythmic films. Less fussing over sets, give premier importance to movement—here is the essential principle.

The foundation a rhythmic passage—a "gag"—will be the base of the work I expect to undertake in the film *La Marche des Sports* and *Rues, Boulevards, Avenues*.

Financial ruin for my plans was predicted on every hand. But, together with the silencing of the critics, these gloomy prophecies were not fulfilled. My films, which did not cost more than 9,000 francs, are showing in all the intellectual cinemas of Europe. America has bought them, and this has permitted me to go on with my work. It is true it has sometimes been difficult to continue my experiments. But that is the common destiny of the young. I do not spend other peoples' money on my films. I have no overseer. I am free. I create what I want. Romanticism, perhaps. But this romanticism—really rather rare—is comforting and gives one reason to hope.

EUGEN DESLAW.

## CLOSE UP

# COMMENT AND REVIEW

### FILM CURIOSITIES—No. 3.

#### ASTA NIELSEN IN HAMLET.

One does not think "Poor films", but "Poor Shakespeare". Claudius moved his jaws in such vehement self-mutterings that I am sure he would be a success in one of those presentations of Shakespeare in modern dress: everyone would take him for a "go-getting" American having difficulty with his chewing gum. Ophelia's plumpness may be historically accurate, no doubt the period epithet would be a "comely wench". Polonious must have got mixed up in the cast of the picture by mistake; I am sure that the company on the adjacent stage were playing *Alladin* with a Shakespearean old man for hero. Scenes were acted as if they were set on a conjurer's platform, all the properties were laid out before the curtain went up; be it a sword or two mugs of ale they were always waiting conveniently on a neighbouring table. Yet one cannot blame the films any more than one can blame the mirror which reflects the tell-tale crow's-feet.

The certitude comes that it cannot be the film's fault when Asta Nielsen, so self-assured, sweeps through a banquet hall, voluminous black cloak billowing from her shoulders.



## CLOSE UP

The only sex interest of this picture is supplied by Hamlet falling in love with Horatio. Nay, be not alarmed, for Hamlet is a woman and none other than Asta Nielsen; but she must ape the man for her mother, in a time of national crisis, gave out to the people that an heir has been born to the throne. William forgot to think of that! Therefore Hamlet walks the battlements in a tight-fitting, high-necked black costume.

Asta Nielsen's face and the black costume, a white passion flower on a black stalk.

No one suspects her masquerade, from the court physician to the plump Ophelia; no one marvels at her smooth complexion, or is distressed because she goes to sleep with her clothes on. I believe that she must have enjoyed an extraordinary amount of privacy for the period.

In its day this film is said to have made a sensation; it deserves its position as film history. Care and expense were taken, although it was surely unorthodox to set the famous scene with the strolling players in the gardens of Elsinore in broad day-light.

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

## FILM CURIOSITIES—No. 4.

### THE DEVIL'S CHURCH.

Nobody seems to know who made this picture or who plays in it; but nobody will contest its antiquity or its curiousness.

## CLOSE UP

Wardour Street whispered that there was a nude in it, and left it at that! By the kindness of Mr. Ogilvie I was allowed to descend into a cellar and watch this film flicker out its odd story.

The devil goes on a busman's holiday. A farmer and his wife live together fairly happily, but the wife longs for a child. There is rather a remarkable shot in which she sees herself as a Madonna with Child receiving homage from the village folk. In uneventful village life the arrival of a baby brings the mother, for a few days, into a weak limelight: grapes from the vicarage, a trinket from husband, calls from neighbours. Just as a chorus-girl might dream of a first night's triumph in a sensational play, so this peasant dreams of a child.

The village church burns down: the devil enters the village. He tempts the woman till she begs him to give her the child. Having an eye for the picturesque, the devil drags her into a wood where dryads play.

"During which", as the gentleman said in one of Mr. Cochran's revues, the local officials gather together to fix the position of the new church. There are three villages, and the only solution seems to be to build the church at an equal distance from all three; on this spot is the hero's farm.

To celebrate his conquest the devil burns down the husband's house. The latter attempts to put out the flames with handfulls of water, but his wife returns and executes an abandoned dance before the footlights of the blazing house. Disgusted, her husband (not without opposition) gives his farm to the building committee. However, the committee refuse to supply the money for the church unless they are

## CLOSE UP

allowed to appropriate some land for personal use. The cleric has scruples. Meditating on the despicable characteristics of mankind he absentmindedly kisses the farmer's wife; a gesture which draws the devil to his elbow.

He, the devil, will build the church, and it shall belong to the vicar unless he denies his faith before the altar: then all within the church's walls shall be damned.

"A miracle, a miracle," cry the villagers, "a new church has sprung up from the ground."

"The devil has built it," answers the clergyman, "let us go and cleanse it."

Singing hymns, the entire village march on the church; a procession which provides the strongest scenes in the picture. Meanwhile the devil is busy in his splendid new church hiding nude women behind curtains.

The vicar very nearly gets the best of it, when the farmer's wife denounces him as her seducer. The devil informs them that they had all better come along to the other place. . .

Somebody wakes up!

Photography is *incroyable*, there is no subtlety in the telling. Two beer mugs overlap on a table, handles balance an abstract design, a tiny thing which we notice for ourselves. To-day a smooth gesture, an inclined head would point it out.

As the devil says in one of his titles: "Well, well, well."

OSWELL BLAKESTON.



## CLOSE UP

### *A Crisis Over.*

The English version of Pabst's *Abwege*, under the title of *Crisis*, was extraordinary faithful. Most of the scenes introducing the drug seller have been cut out, but when we think of the horrid things that have happened to other Continental pictures we can only express our gratitude to the Alpha Film Company.

Yet in a way we felt that we were seeing a different picture to the one we saw in Berlin, as the copy shown at the London Hippodrome was not tinted. It made us realize how important this question is, and how necessary it is for a director to arrange his own tints.

O. B.

## TWO BOOKS

*The British Journal Photographic Almanac* for 1929 is a book of 800 pages, with 64 pictorial photographs in gravure, and it costs two shillings. Most of the photographs look as if they had been taken after a careful study of an elementary text-book of composition; there is so much striving after pyramidal, diagonal, elliptical or tunnel compositions. But the text is really splendid documentation of chemical formulas, apparatus, recent innovations, et cetera. Neither can one complain about the copious advertisements which make the production of this volume possible; for it is rather thrilling to be invited to call in at a shop in the Jerusalemer-

strasse of Berlin to see an " Invisible Camera " (as used by detectives of the best traditions).

Another achievement is *Photograms of the Year*, at five shillings. Mr. F. J. Mortimer has found some lovely things : an interesting still-life that shows the stiff collar in a new aspect, some sulkily irradiant coils of leaden wire, fragile brittleness of light from phials and retorts, and the modish elegance of Cecil Beaton.

The publishers of these two volumes (Henry Greenwood and Iliffe and Sons) are to be congratulated.

OSWELL BLAKESTON.

### HOLLYWOOD NOTES.

Max Reinhardt, who recently arrived in Hollywood from his home in Austria, has settled down to work on his personally directed picture, *The Miracle Girl*. Lillian Gish plays the stellar rôle. The photodrama was written especially for her by Hugo von Hofmansthal, the Austrian poet-playwright. The film colony is promised some interesting and arresting innovations in picture making, with Reinhardt in command and enjoying *carte blanche* to carry out his personal ideas. Credit for this notable undertaking goes to Joseph Schenck, head of United Artists. Reinhardt had heretofore consistently declined the many offers from Hollywood seeking to induce him to come here and apply his genius to the celluloid drama.

\* \* \*



## CLOSE UP

George Arliss is to return to the screen. He will begin work in April on the first of three talking pictures. While in Los Angeles recently, playing in *The Merchant of Venice*, he was an interested visitor at several of the larger Hollywood studios, studying the mechanism of the phonofilm and acquainting himself with this recent cinema innovation. Its possibilities strongly appealed to him. "The works of the great master, Shakespeare, may soon be uniquely used in the talking pictures," he declared. "We have only had the advent of the real talking picture up to the present, but when this device or art is fully developed the true greatness of Shakespeare may be embraced in this development."

\* \* \*

The Western picture, after a vogue of nearly twenty years, is fading out. None of the larger studios include any of this type in their current schedules. Tom Mix, hero of some two hundred Wild West dramas, is completing his last film.

Dramas of the underworld and mystery stories are the present vogue. Of the latter type, Paramount-Lasky has just completed *The Canary Murder Case*, and has now under way *The Greene Murder Case*. Paul Leni's *The Last Warning*, a Universal production, has been drawing large crowds wherever shown. *The Trial of Mary Dugan* is in production at the M-G-M studio. Incidentally, Mme. Adrienne d'Ambricourt, a one-time member of the Sarah Bernhardt and the Comedie-Française companies, will have a leading part in this film. Sir Philip Gibbs' dramatic story of mystery and spiritualism, *Darkened Rooms*, is scheduled for early production at the Paramount studio. The picture will be directed



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by Lothar Mendes and will include Evelyn Brent and William Powell in the cast.

Another trend in cinema style is to be noted in the exotic *genre* picture, in which the cast is composed of the actual type portrayed. M-G-M is producing an all-Mexican film and an all-Chinese film, each of them in color and with sound. Several Negro pictures have already been released and others are on the way.

\* \* \*

First National, now under the Warner Brothers's banner, is preparing to spend eighteen million dollars in talking pictures during the coming year. Universal's budget calls for an outlay of sixteen millions. The recently reorganized FBO, which includes a merger with the Radio Corporation of America and a change of name to RKO, will probably invest twenty millions in phonofilms during the next twelve months. Warner Brothers's schedule calls for thirty talking pictures, at an average cost of half a million. And these are but typical examples of Hollywood's present enthusiasm over the recently arrived audible film. Such vast expenditures on the part of the hard-headed, commercially-minded producers, who have their entire fortunes at stake, will give the Doubting Thomases something to ponder over.

\* \* \*

Douglas Fairbanks's *The Man in the Iron Mask*, his latest picture, will present a novelty in sound effects. Instead of having the characters speak their lines from the screen, a single voice will be heard describing the action and the motivations of the actors, after the manner of the old Greek chorus. This experiment will be watched with interest. It

## CLOSE UP

may serve to solve the present problem of showing talking pictures in foreign countries. The speech of the invisible chorus could readily be rendered in any language.

\* \* \*

"Crystalizing" film by immersing it in a chemical solution which gives it a "grain" or wood-cut effect, is a recently invented process which is being used for the first time in the filming of *The Bridge of San Luis Rey*. John Nickolaus, of the M-G-M laboratories, is the inventor of it.

\* \* \*

Frank Borzage, as the director, and Janet Gaynor and Charles Farrell as the leading actors—the combination responsible for the success of *Seventh Heaven* and *Street Angel*—will again join forces in the production of a picture at the Fox Studio. The story is an adaptation of Tristram Tupper's *Three Episodes in the Life of Timothy Osborn*. The film title has not yet been selected.

\* \* \*

Since the advent of the "talkies" many of the foreign players, especially among the women, have succeeded with significant rapidity in discarding their marked foreign accent. During the reign of the silent drama such an accent was a badge of distinction. Indeed, a number of enterprising native Americans assumed it and cultivated it, as a means of gaining an entrée to the films. As it is now a liability rather than an asset, this affectation has gone into the discard along with many other now obsolescent accompaniments of the movies.

\* \* \*

An opaque film is one of the latest cinema inventions. The picture is photographed on one side, and the sound on the



## CLOSE UP

other. Projection on the screen is effected by means of reflected light. No commercial use has yet been made of it, but it is typical of the many inventions that have come into being since the advent of the talking pictures—inventions in the fields of optics and accoustics—and tending to demonstrate that the initial difficulties besetting the talking films will eventually be met.

Jacques Feyder, the noted French director, is a recent addition to the Hollywood colony. He is under contract with Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer. Upon his arrival he graciously declared that he expects to learn much of cinema technique and artistry while here. He does not think that the talking picture will replace the silent drama, but will serve as an additional popular form of entertainment. A conservative opinion which many share with him.

If the same story were filmed in two versions—as a silent picture and as a talking picture—which would the public prefer? Carl Laemmle, president of Universal, is investing two million dollars in order to obtain the answer to this question. He is preparing two complete, separate productions of *Broadway*; one in the old regulation style, as silent drama, with printed titles, and the other according to the latest mode, with every movement of the lips audible. Both versions are scheduled to be finished in April, at which time they will be run simultaneously in two theatres in New York.

Mr. Laemmle has requested Mr. Hays, head of the Motion Picture Producers's and Distributors's Association, to appoint a committee of representative critics to pass judgment on the



## CLOSE UP

comparative merits of the two pictures. Their findings, in conjunction with the verdict of the public as recorded by the box office, will go far toward settling the present wide-spread discussion as to whether the talkies are to be or not to be.

\* \* \*

Norma Talmadge is preparing to make her debut in an all-talking picture. The vehicle chosen for this venture is Channing Pollock's stage success of 1919-21, *The Sign on the Door*. Miss Talmadge, who began her cinema career in 1911, at the age of fourteen, has had no stage experience. Her appearance on the screen, therefore, in a speaking part will be awaited with much interest.

C. H.

### *The Four Feathers.*

*The Four Feathers* (see stills in this issue) will have complete sound effects and musical synchronization, but no dialogue. This is the decision made by Adolph Zukor and Jesse L. Lasky after seeing the picture in rough-cut form. Dialogue would slow down the action.

The directors of *The Four Feathers* are Merian C. Cooper and Ernest B. Schoedsack, writers, photographers, soldiers of fortune, adventurers, makers of *Grass* and *Chang*. They spent more than a year in the wilds of Africa filming sequences for *The Four Feathers*, and exposed over 60,000 feet of film.

The cast of *The Four Feathers* includes Richard Arlen, Fay Wray, Clive Brook, William Powell, Theodor von Eltz, Noah Beery, George Fawcett, Philippe de Lacy and others.

## CLOSE UP

Although *Cosmos* has been passed by the censors, we are informed from Berlin and by those who have seen the foreign version, that practically all the sequences relating to sex have been deleted. As the primary intention of this film is a scientific documentation of the principle and function of sex throughout the whole of Nature, its value compared with that of the original version can perhaps be estimated. *Jeanne Ney* was slightly under 9,000 feet abroad. In the *Kinematograph Year Book* for 1929 it is listed as 5,835 feet. *Do not be put off with small victories.*

Intellectual liberty in England demands a complete reconstruction of the principles of censorship. We are now manacled by something that is obsolete, divorced from reality, at cross-purposes with artistic, scientific and cultural progress, and devoid of any consideration of the wishes of the public, or the advantage of morality.

If the only aspects of sex life sanctioned on the screen are those which lead directly to the necessity for such films as *Dangers of Ignorance*, and the only aspects of sex life tabooed are the scientific, educative, biological and medical, we are confronted with something that is openly opposed to the advancement of health and security, and a direct advocate of the antithesis of its supposed function. It is a quibble, an impertinence, and, in its determination to conceal thoughtful facts, a menace to the young. It is a carillon of cracked bells as a hymn of praise to aphrodisiac, and its profession to stand for culture and the preservation of immature audiences from harm is analogous to sending a child into the fever ward of an hospital, forbidding immunisation and announcing that you would sooner see a child dead than exposed to contamination.



## CLOSE UP

Our censorship is the most illiterate in Europe. Lupu Pick remarked that every State has the right to defend its elementary principles of existence. The only way to defend ours is to reform the system of censorship—which, as a paradox is quaint and as a truth irrefutable.

*Sign our petition form enclosed in this issue, the purpose of which is to help bring about the much-needed reconstitution.*

The petition closes on March 15th. As soon after this date as possible it will be presented for consideration to the House of Commons.

Meanwhile, a report issued in early February by the London County Council reveals the fact that to all intents and purposes the very function of censorship is nullified by one clause which states clearly *that no films printed on non-flam stock come under the jurisdiction of the London County Council, and that these films may be shown in licensed or unlicensed premises without let or hindrance from the Council on condition that the entertainment is entirely free from any element, such as music, subject to license in the ordinary way.*

In other words, there is no law to prevent any film rejected by the Council or the Censor from being shown publicly throughout England provided it is printed on non-flam stock and shown without accompaniment.

What an opportunity! It's not agin' the law, and it may be splitting a fine hair, but drastic gestures are essential in a country where you may buy a newly baked meat patty after 8 p.m. and go to prison if you try to buy a stale one!



Most excellent of papers is *The Cinema*. The tone of our voice is wholehearted, because, if you look carefully, you will see in our eye the expression with which one child regards the other's bag of candy.

This time, like last time, it is another borrowed plume, and, to go on mixing metaphors, how thorough (if you come to look at it) is *The Cinema's* survey of the All Mans' Land of the film. It is like an industrious rodent burrowing under the somewhat Grimm's Forest Oak of cinematic development, dwelling in the roots, and often bringing to light the subterranean pests that try to devour them. A recent issue disinterred this wriggling centipede:—

The Reverend Tyler Lane, a man of God who ministers to the spiritual needs of the good people of Sheffield, and would like to minister to those of the bad ones, has been stretching himself oratorically on the matter of music on Sundays. He does not approve of the musical entertainment provided in Sheffield cinemas on the Sabbath, and has appealed to the Council to stop them.

He sees the mark of the cloven hoof on the sidewalks of Sheffield, and brimstone and sulphur emanating from the Sabbath saxophone. "I fear," says he, "that some of the people behind the Sunday concerts do not regard the Christian Sunday in the same light as religious people." Well, it isn't in the Scriptures, Tyler, but you've said a mouthful.

It wants a case made out yet for the regulation of the people's rest and recreation by the pious and the psalmists. It may seem strange to those who go into the gutter and complain about the dirt, but it is permissible for tired working folk to seek, on the only day they have to their ease, some

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relaxation and forgetfulness from the toil of earning a living. It is possible, too, that in the cinema, listening to the music or even looking at the films, they are as near to God, as clean and as morally well as any neighbour armed with a hymn-book in a local Bethel.

As to the objection of the Reverend Lane to Sunday labour. His kidney are ever ready to flutter a flag of freedom when it synchronises with their celestial propaganda. But do they carry the same eagerness for reform on to Monday and Tuesday? And do they scorn the morning paper printed on Sunday night? Do they live in darkness rather than use the gas made at the works on Sunday? Do they leave the Sunday morning milk untouched on the family porch? Well, you know what the lady in Pygmalion said.

They don't do any of these things because they interrupt their immediate comfort. But when it interrupts the comfort of the common people, they try to blackmail them into acquiescence with the sword of fire and the roar of heavenly thunder.

As a matter of fact, my intimate and comprehensive knowledge with the Holy Word does not call to mind any permission for teachers to work on Sundays. Indeed, the only relevant text forbids even the cattle—or, as another commandment mentions more specifically, the ox and the ass. But perhaps after all the category does not include Wesleyan divine.

The Prophet of Doom said one good say when he let slip : " In certain respects the church is twenty years behind the people." He will receive further evidence of this when the

matter comes for debate before the City Council on February 6th.

A few days later came this final jet of insect-killer :—

My little exposition of the machinations of that Prophet of Doom, the Rev. Tyler Lane, of Sheffield, has moved a correspondent to reminiscence, which is unhappy for the saintly one. The writer is C. Hatton, of Kingswinford, a well-known figure in Yorkshire journalistic circles.

He writes :—

" I was in Sheffield a few years ago, and attended a religious service conducted by this gentleman at the Albert Hall Cinema. As far as I can remember, there was a solo violinist and also a vocalist performing, and I have never before or since attended a service which so closely resembled a sacred concert.

" Presumably the artists were paid, and out of the collection. So the Rev. Lane did not scorn to bill these attractions in order to swell his offertory."

Give and take, Tyler ! Give and take !

Who'll send the reverend gentleman a poultice ?



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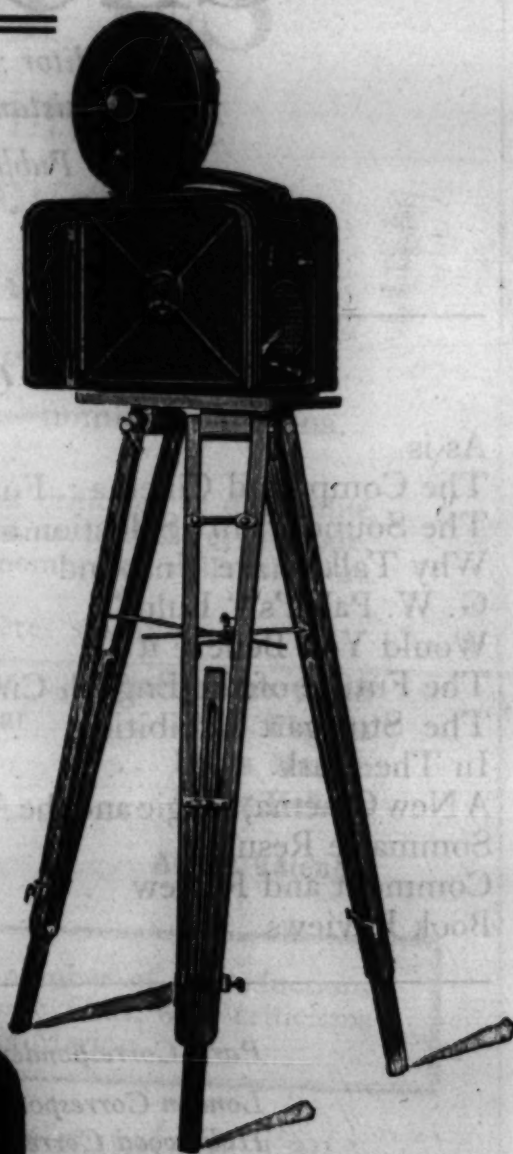
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